



**Harold Wright**  
**Interviewed on September 8, 2004 by Beverly Bishop**  
**White River Junction, Vermont**

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** This recording is being done as part of the Oral History Project that the Town of Hartford, Vermont is undergoing at this time. It's September 8th, 2004 and this is Beverly Bishop of Lasting Legacy of Stowe, Vermont, and today I'm sitting down with Harold Wright in his home in White River Junction, Vermont. And Harold's wife Maxine has agreed to join us and hopefully will add some flavor to this conversation. So anyway, Harold, I wonder if you could just tell me a little bit about yourself.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well actually I wasn't born right here. I was born in Hanover, my folks lived here and I was born September 28th, 1926 so I'll be seventy-eight in a few days and I've been fortunate to have lived here in the Town of Hartford so far, not quite all my life yet but I hope I got a few more days, but it's, it's been an interesting time and we've seen a lot of changes in our times, many things that I've probably forgotten about but some of the things like we used to have

a water box out here, my grandfather had that he got a little money from the Town because he had to provide a public drinking place for horses on the road, they, they had to keep that open so they could, horses could stop and get a drink of water and you, you know today you don't see anything like that and the road that we have here Route 5 was probably a dirt road up till the early '30s. I can just barely remember and it's sort of interesting Lou Perini who owned the Boston Braves baseball team at one time, the Perini Construction Company paved this section of Route, Route 5 and Lou Perini was a young engineer just out of college and he was here on this job as in charge of it and ran the job and of course he went on, Perini Construction became very big, and they got a lot of big world contracts and they bought the Boston Braves and moved them to Milwaukee and all those good things, but Lou Perini actually was here and my father used to sell, we used to be much more self-sufficient, he sold him turkeys at Thanksgiving time and it, it was, it was interesting that a fellow like that would have been here as, he was a young engineer just out of school and that was his first year job, and of course we had many, many trains come into White River too which was quite a contrast now.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** If you missed one train there'd be another one right along, no hurry. We would go to Boston on the train and go to a baseball game and come home after and it didn't cost us.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Now what years would that be?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, this probably would be in the '30s 'cause I, I was, see I was born in '26 and I was probably in grammar school maybe into high school, probably in the late '30s and --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So just to get a little bit of background on yourself, you were, you were not born here. Where, you were born in?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I, I was, I was -- My folks lived across the road in the house across the road and actually my brother was born there, he's the only, we had four boys and he was, my mother wanted to have one pure Vermonter and so she had Edward at home and David and myself and Donald were all born at Mary Hitchcock or Dartmouth Hitchcock, it's Dartmouth Hitchcock now, but in those days it was Mary Hitchcock Hospital in Hanover and in fact I think, I

think that Dr. -- Who did we have for Gail? But I think maybe the, the person who brought Donald and myself we had the next generation but our oldest girl was born, the same doctor.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, the same doctor.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But that's, I, I can't tell for sure.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I can't even remember what his name was. I should know, Dr. Zepaday (?), or something like that.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** From what you've shown me it looks like your ancestors go way back.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And so tell me just a little bit about your earliest ancestors and?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well my great, great, great grandfather came here and was one of the original settlers in the Town of Hartford, Major David Wright and they settled up the road just about a mile was the original farmstead. In those days most everybody came from Connecticut to Vermont, they came right up the river. In fact until recently I thought they more come up in the summertime, but a lot of them came up in the wintertime because they could come on the river and walk on the ice and so they, they didn't, but the Town was chartered July 4th, 1761 and he and my mother's family were both signers of the original charter.

Now we have the lotteries today but they had a lottery when the Town was established who got where, they got it surveyed and then they had a lottery as to who got which lots, and my family got a lot right up here at the corner about a mile, Major David Wright and then the Gillettes on the other side, they're up near Wilder. It was right near the Dothan Street School that was there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Could you talk a little bit about the burial grounds there, the tombs?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well my, my great, great, great grandfather Major David Wright is buried up here in an above ground tomb, in those days there was no embalment and people were just put in a pine box more or less and buried, and he built this tomb above ground 'cause in those days there was, some people had a, when, would go into a coma, it was quite a deep coma, it was a sleeping sickness and they really weren't dead and he didn't want to be buried alive so he built

the tomb and left specific instructions that his coffin was not to be nailed down and the tomb doors were not to be locked so that if he ever wanted to get out he could get out.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What a story.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He's still there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And he, he was born and died in what year?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well let's see.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Around.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He was, he was here and signed on July 4th, 1761 was when the charter was issued.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** The Governor from New Hampshire.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** He was a very early settler?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And then -- Yeah, he was one of the original settlers and on my mother's side the Gillettes were also original settlers here so that our roots are fairly deep.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. So what do you remember about your more recent ancestors --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, I --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Like your grandparents?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I knew my grandfather and grandmother Seth Wright and his wife was Lena and she came up here in the village, she was one of three sisters, it was Lena, and Nettie and Jessie and all three of them of course married farmers. Nettie Simons lived just up the road a bit next place and Jessie lived in Hartford Village on a farm just out of the village, but --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** It's all houses now.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And it, it was interesting they, they of course they had telephones and once they, they'd say at 9:00 they had one sister would call the other one and they all had party line, the three of them would all get on and, and visit, hash over the things of the day.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And Jessie was the oldest and she sort of, I, I can remember she used to say, "Well that's it for today, goodbye," and it was over but that, that was you know we had no T.V., we didn't have, my grandfather had a, what is it Philco radio right over in that corner there and he used to listen to that profusely, I mean he'd just would listen to that every time, same as some people watch T.V. today but he would listen to radio, probably couldn't get many channels, I don't know what you could get but he used to listen to it, and get to know it. He was, he was a lister for the Town of Hartford here for many years and he served the Town as a lister and my grandmother many, I can't remember a lot of things that happened but I can remember we used to have turkeys and we'd have to have some hatching eggs and in the bedroom they had these boxes they used to put the turkey eggs in and had to turn them every so often, I don't know why something about the hatching, they wouldn't hatch if you didn't turn them.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And she used to do that and those days everybody was pretty self-sufficient, they used to have some, couple pigs, they'd dress them off in the fall, they'd have ham and bacon and stuff like that and we didn't have any freezers but they used to keep it in the cellar where it was cool and you'd have, they made butter and didn't have many cattle, maybe ten cows, maybe five cows, I don't know, they didn't milk hardly any in the wintertime.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** In the spring they used to get more milk, make, make some butter, make more cheese, things like that.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Now your grandfather Wright that had, was the lister did he also do something else, was he a --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well he worked on the farm here of course but and, and he belonged to the Rotary, he was one of the, he was not a charter member of the White River Rotary but he was one of the very early ones and he just loved to go to Rotary on Tuesday he just, that was his thing in the latter years that I can remember him he just wouldn't, didn't want to miss a Rotary meeting, and he, he was, was in those days everybody was pretty religious went to church Sunday

morning but he didn't go towards the end 'cause he went to sleep in church and his wife got disgusted with him for sleeping in church and so he'd stay home but.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What church did he go to?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Hartford Congregational Church and my, I was trying to think now, whether Gillettes or the Wrights that, when they built the church they sold the pews to help pay for it and you, you, they, you could buy a pew and they took number thirteen because nobody seemed to like thirteen and I forget whether it was the Gillettes or the Wrights but anyway they, if you look in the Hartford Church up there, the Second, it's the Second Congregational Church you'll see pew thirteen is, I, I should remember I've, I've seen it times whether it's the Wrights or Gillettes, but anyway that, that's where we went to church and when we were growing up we went to church every Sunday, had Sunday school in church every Sunday.

And as we got older of course when we began to do more things we'd go to, for entertainment we would go to card parties. Did you ever go to a card party, a whist party?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** No. You know it would be good if you sat over in more like there 'cause I can't see you.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Sure, all right.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You want me to move your chair over a little?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We used to go to whist parties and it was fun, we, we'd play cards for a couple of hours and then we would have some refreshments.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You're going to sit on the couch or on the chair, whichever is more comfortable. There you go.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But we, then we'd, we'd play cards for a couple of hours, then we'd have some refreshments and then move from different homes around and they'd have like at our place one month, then at the Simons one month and somewhere else the next month or up the road.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So it was more just social –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, no.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** No fund raising –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** -- or anything in part of it?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, strictly fun.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And it was only your church?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no, wasn't, that was nothing to do with church.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, nothing to do with church?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That, this was just a neighborhood thing.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, nope, nothing with the church. That, I don't think the church would allow you to play cards in those days, but it was a neighborhood thing and you know like when it was here one month they, somebody would say, "Well you can come to my house next month," and, and they'd move around.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And they, there wouldn't be a lot of people maybe ten, fifteen people. It was a nice friendly time, we'd, we'd play cards but I mean that was, like today people jump in the car and drive to Manchester to a concert or something, we didn't do that.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. Well, just to go back a little bit to your grandparents, if you had to describe them, you know your grandfather on the Wright side and the grandmother?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** My, my grandfather and grandmother were probably two of the thriftiest people that ever were, they didn't waste anything. They didn't throw away a crumb. They didn't let anything, the vegetables in the garden were all used, all of the, you know if we, if we had milk that they separated they'd feed the skim milk to the pigs, the vegetables that, that weren't eaten were fed to the pigs and the, they, there was never any waste, my, both my grandfather, probably my grandmother -- Did, you never knew her, did you, but you didn't know her, but you didn't know her she was real old but she was very thrifty.

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** I didn't know your grandfather.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But she, I mean she just didn't want to waste anything.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** She would save clothes. She would, she'd have a rag bag, put the rags in a rag bag make a rug.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep. If you, if you could describe, how about their values I mean what was important to them do you think?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well I know my grandfather was very, very honest. He just was honest to a point of no return. He just was very, very honest. He was, he was a lister and used to go around and list things and if he walked in the, of course in those days the, the cows were all appraised, horses were all appraised and he, he would be very concerned if somebody said they only had six cows and he knew they had ten, you know he, he'd just, that used to bug him and he wouldn't do anything that was unethical or illegal.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How about your grandmother?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well she wasn't anywhere near, she stayed home pretty much as I can remember, she used to go to church on Sundays and I don't think that, she might have gone shopping once in awhile but of course in those days they didn't have the supermarkets, they had some department stores and things like that where she might have to go and get something but made most of her clothes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And didn't, I, I, she must have bought some shoes sometime along and maybe but she would pass the, she'd go to a rummage sale or something and get something and use it, but she was very, very thrifty that way, both of them were.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How, how about -- Can you remember your Gillette grandparents?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Not, not nearly as well 'cause they lived up above Wilder and my grandfather, my mother's father died when I was probably two, three years old, quite young.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He had a, a heart attack out in his garden and died and his widow came and lived with us at the end and I can remember.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Do you mean your grandmother?



**HAROLD WRIGHT:** She came and lived with my mother.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Okay.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And father. My grandmother.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Okay.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** After, after her husband died, oh she, she must have been -- Did you remember her?

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** I never knew your mother's mother.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But she came, in those days they, they didn't put people in nursing homes, they, they took care of their own and my mother and father she came when she got so she couldn't take care of herself she came and stayed with us and I, I can't remember nearly enough as I could on my father's side 'cause we were just across roads, they were like here this was their home, they lived here and we used to be down here a lot you know playing on the ground, there was a brook down back here, we'd, we used to go down to the brook and do a little fishing, and, and you know it was just natural thing come here whereas my mother's folks up in Wilder one day when you hand in, of course my grandfather died when I was very young so I, I, all I remember there was Angie and she had a couple of sisters that were quite religious, one was a missionary, went to Burma, India I guess and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What about, what about your parents?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well my mother on Gillette, Helen Burns Gillette Wright was born up at, I, I believe she was born at the, at the home up there at on Christian Street just above Wilder by the Dothan School.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** The home?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** At, at her, I think she was born at home not.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, at home.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Not in a hospital.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Uh-huh.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I think and she graduated from high school and she went onto Smith College and in those days very few women went to college. It wasn't, you know women didn't go

to college. She went and she graduated from Smith in 1913 and then she came back here and taught school for a few years and then she got married and she got married in about, I could look it up, it was around 1920.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How did, how did your parents -- Did they always know each other or how did they?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh they were, yeah they, they both, all, both sides of the family belonged to the same church and that was sort of a social place and my father was a little younger than my mother actually and she taught school at Hartford High School a number of years, nothing extensive, but you know maybe three, four, five years and then she, after she got married she was busy with the family and she was pretty thrifty too she didn't, she, she was not probably as, as good a seamstress as my grandmother Wright but she, she could darn, darn some stockings and sew some patches and things like that on your overalls and she, she was pretty careful.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** She worked during World War II, she was on the ration board, worked quite a few years she was on that ration board. You probably, that was before you, yeah.

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** That was before I was here that's why.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But she, she was on the ration board and she was, in those days they had the Home Demonstration Clubs where they, the ladies got together with a Home Demonstration agent, told them how to can things and how to grow good vegetables and what to eat that were nutritious and all these nice things.

My father went to Mount Herman School and he went up to Lyndonville to the Valhi Agricultural College and then he came home and worked on the farm.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep. So if you had to describe your, your parents how would you describe them?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well I, I would guess that they were probably not quite as thrifty and careful as my grandparents that I knew pretty well but they didn't waste anything much of anything and they were pretty self-sufficient. One year at Thanksgiving my mother made a point to have everything grown on the farm and I think about the only thing she didn't was, were some spice or

something she might've used in the dressing for the turkey stuffing that she just couldn't, you know she, she had to make, make we'd -- In those days we used to do a little sugaring, we had some chickens and like I say we had a few, a couple pigs and, and we were just, we were pretty much self-sufficient and she was pretty happy all the vegetables of course were grown, potatoes and squash.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Onion, turkey but I think that the only thing she had to go outside was to get some spices for the dressing for the turkey, which you know.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Well like I was more thinking too about like their personalities and what they looked like and –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, my mother.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You know were they --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** My, on my mother's side was probably larger boned family, they were bigger taller --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- than my father, my grandfather I don't think he was probably five foot eight or ten and my grandmother on that side I don't think she was, you know hard to tell, but I'd say five six probably five seven and but on my mother's side they were bigger, my mother was probably five ten, would you guess?

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** Actually she was a big woman.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And her father, the pictures I've seen of Edward Gillette were, were he was pretty tall and pretty not heavy fat but he was, he was pretty, he probably six foot two and he had, there's a cousin of my mother's Moshes and they had –

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** Watson.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Watson Moshes was over six feet and his brother Hershel he was probably six foot four, so that, there was, there was some size on my mother's side more than probably on my father's side.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What about personality?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well I think as they, they were of course were, were active in the church and I think my mother's personality was probably a little more stable than my father's, he used to get a little upset once in awhile and my mother would, was pretty even. She, she, I think we all have a lot of respect for more, probably more respect for her than we did for my father, not that we didn't respect them both but I, I think that push come to shove probably my mother.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Would be the one.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So can you talk a little bit about your growing up years and your family –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, you know –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** -- in your family, you know what was it like as a child and?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We were here during the Depression years of course and we, we didn't have, I remember we picked strawberries all, we had a strawberry patch and picked strawberries and mother used to pick 'em over, we'd pick, I had, my brothers and I would, we'd pick the strawberries, she'd pick 'em over, then we had an old pick-up truck and we had to go downtown and pedal 'em door-to-door and you know you, you can get doors shut in your face pretty quick if, if they don't want to buy strawberries or if somebody's been there and told 'em those cheaper than ours, you know like we were getting maybe twenty cents a quart, somebody say, "Well we just had a guy here that was selling fifteen, you want to take fifteen cents," and you know you'd have to go ask our mother she was in the pick-up, she'd say, "No, I guess we won't, we'll keep going," and, and if we had any strawberries left she'd always make jam, they didn't get thrown out and you know what we got for a reward? We went to the circus, the circus came into town and we'd go to circus, if we picked strawberries all summer and attended to business, did well, we can go to circus and we were happy doing it, we were happy. We, we used to --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What was the best part of the circus do you think?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh probably the clowns, probably the clowns or the, they, they had some good animal acts, good horse, trained horses. I remember one year they had some bears that were pretty well trained. I wouldn't have got in that cage with those bears or way up you know and then standing up and the guy chase 'em around with a whip, you know and but it was, it was

fun. We used to go to circus, that was our reward and once in awhile if we were really good we could go to movies Saturday afternoon, that cost a dime and they had a double feature, they'd have a western and a detective one or something I don't know.

(The end of side one of tape one. The beginning of side two of tape one.)

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Hartford that's for sure, but I just wanted to just get a little bit more flavor of what, what it was like growing up, I mean you had siblings?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And you went to school and probably had some chores and games and?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh we, we had chores to do in the morning before we went to school and chores to do in the afternoon when I got home and being a third boy I, I got very, very few new clothes, they were mostly all hand-down and also we'd go to rummage sale, the church always had a big rummage sale every year and you'd go there and, and I know my mother used to say that you know some of the more wealthy people would give stuff to the rummage sale 'cause they didn't want to pass it down to or they didn't have any younger ones and she got some nice clothes there for us at the rummage sale and the, the, the, these Second Hand Roses and stores like that today there's some very good clothes there that are very reasonable and of course most of us are probably too proud to go there but I, I remember when would, our big outing for going out to supper or dinner, we'd go to church supper every fall, that was a big outing. We'd get chores done early. We'd work like mad to get our chores done so we could go to church supper Saturday night and you know it was just a nice evening out. I can never remember when we didn't have a car. Now I suspect my older brothers could remember if before but we, we always had a vehicle.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So what was -- What was your earliest memory of the car that you liked the best?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, I don't know. We, I guess probably about a 1934, '36 Pontiac. I thought that was probably the nicest car, even had a heater in it, it didn't work all the time but it, it was, compared, we, we had a pick-up that didn't have any heater in it you'd freeze to death in that in the wintertime but you, this car had a heater and it really would warm the car up and the

wind -- windows would get all frosted up and then they had one of these defrosters that you put on and you could just look through there, it was, that was probably about a '36 Pontiac, thirty, yeah had to been about ten years, about that.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. It's -- Do you want to talk a little bit about school?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well we, we went, I never went to a one room school, my brother went down here to Russtown to the one room school, you know where the landfill is right down the road about a mile?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That, there was a one room school there and he went there I think one or two years but I always went to White River. Now where the Municipal Building is was a school that was a, that, elementary school and all eight grades were there, four grades on the first floor and four grades upstairs.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Did you have different teachers?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And what was your favorite one? Did you have a favorite teacher?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I can't, I can't remember all the teachers but some, some of the older teachers was, was a lady named Miss Regan and boy she was tough, I mean you didn't cross her. I, I mean it was, story was you know she had a stick that was and she used it, and a ruler that she used, and then there was a Mrs. Farrington that taught in the upper grades. The four, first four grades were downstairs, the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth were upstairs and you know there was no gymnasium the, the, at the, when you went out and played recess you went outdoors and played around, run around, you didn't have a gym, and it was cold you'd bundle up unless, unless it was really, really awful you went outdoors every, everyday.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What kinds of things did you play, do you remember anything?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, they, they used to, always had a big pile of snow.

Daisy, Daisy.

They always had a big pile of snow and they had this King of the Hill and oh they used to get pretty rough, some of the big guys would get up on there you know and you'd try to knock 'em off

and you'd get knocked off and it, it was pretty exciting and then in the spring of course you used to play baseball.

**MAXINE WRIGHT:** She'll pester you.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But I remember in the wintertime when they had this big, big snow pile and King of the Hill and the little guys they got pushed off pretty good and then we went up and we, we didn't go, we went up to where the elementary school is, was then the high school and they had a.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Was within the high school?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Huh

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** It was in the high school?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no. The, the, the high school had originally four rooms and then they built on some more in the 30s and they built the gymnasium there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, okay.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And I would guess it was in the late '30s 'cause I think they had the seventh and eighth grade up there and, and I went up there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. Did you play sports or?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, we played football and basketball.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, competitively or?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, against other schools?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, and we, our football team we, we were fair. We, we'd win a few, lose a few but in those days we used to play Hanover and Lebanon, they were our two biggest opponents.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** If you could beat Lebanon the season was a success, if you lost to Lebanon well maybe we'll beat 'em next year.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But it wasn't quite the rivalry with Hanover as there was with Leb. Windsor was a big rivalry. We played Hanover, Lebanon, Windsor, Newport, New Hampshire, Springfield, we played Springfield. Springfield used to beat us pretty good, Beverly. They had a lot of Polish people down there, they could – I remember one year, gee, they must have had all the big boys in Springfield, when they came on the field had, "Oh my gosh we're in trouble," and we were but we could be competitive with them most of the time and we played Bellows Falls. We played Brattleboro sometimes.

Playing basketball during the war years we used to go by train down to Brattleboro, went by train to Springfield and took the little Toonerville Trolley up there, get off at Charlestown, take that little train up to Springfield and that was, that was back in the '40s.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Did you say the Toonerville or Spoonerville?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Toonerville, I think they called it the Toonerville Trolley. I, I can't, but you know where it ran from Charlestown up to Springfield.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And also up to Saint Albans and up to Swanton. I didn't know that until yesterday I was doing a history up, with a friend, a person in Stowe.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That the, you ask anybody down in Springfield you can still see where the tracks went; they're all torn up now.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They came up by the.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Toll bridge?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They came by where the Young's Propane is, came through on, on by Route 5 and on the south side of the river, oh what's that restaurant there across the river from.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** The Howard Johnson?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no, no, they came by there but on.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** On the New Hampshire side?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no on the Vermont side, the tracks used to come across on the toll bridge.



**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Well my grandparents owned the restaurant that was right by the toll bridge on the Vermont side?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** They had that. It was a gas station and a restaurant.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, yeah, over there, right by there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep, I know because I remember it going through there.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh what's that there, oh, but anyway it, it used to come out of, you can still see, I think they've got jogging trails and snowmobile and bicycle trails.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep, right up by the J & L.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And came out by, yep, yep, right up into the village.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Up to the Edna Brown?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, yep, yep, and then, then soon as the game was over boy we had to get right over there 'cause it, they wouldn't go 'til we got there but I don't know the train coming from Bellows Falls into White River would wait for us.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Because but the Toonerville Trolley would, would wait 'til, 'til the game was over.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Then we'd go back to Charlestown, get on the train come back to White River.

**DONNA WRIGHT:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** You want to come in?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** It'll be easier. So, so you did some, some sports and did the train and all that. What about your later years in high school and then graduation, and what'd you do after that?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** In, in high school I enlisted, see I was a, a little young to get, to go in the Army. I remember Pearl Harbor Day we were all called for assembly in the school and we heard President Roosevelt tell us that Pearl Harbor had been attacked on Sunday December 7th and he

was declaring war on Japan and Germany. I was a freshman in high school I think and my senior year I enlisted in the service in September with the understanding that they would not pick me up 'til I graduated and as it turned out I, I graduated in June of '44 and it was well into the fall before I went and I never saw any active duty per se, when you were, group of us were trained, we, we, they sent us to Fort Devens, Mass. then they shipped us down to Shepherd Field in Texas, Wichita Falls and when we were on a troop train going from Shepherd Field up to Denver the war in Europe ended, VE Day we were on a troop train between Shepherd Field and Denver.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And then they sent us down to Orlando, Florida for some more training and then we were sent, I say we, there was three or four of us it seemed to hang together, we went to Alexandria, Virginia for a schooling for map reproduction and photographer and when we were there the war in Japan ended and probably one of the biggest mistakes I have made, and I've made my share of mistakes they wanted us all to enlist to go in the Army of Occupation and there would have been a great chance to see you know you'd go to Germany, or you'd go to Japan but you had to sign up for like three years and I don't know I just thought I wanted to go home, I wanted to come back to Vermont and I did. I, I probably should've gone cause you know it was a great chance, how many people get a chance to get paid to go to the, the, the Army of Occupation in both Germany and Japan was, it was pretty good, you, you were well fed, you were well and the money wasn't big but you had very limited expenses.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And you had many, many fringe benefits things, but I came home and I, I went to work here at the farm with my, my older brother was also in the service when he came home he graduated from college, he went to work for the Extension Service and so there was Edward and myself and Donald. Donald was nearly blind, but and but by the time he got through high school he was blind or college he was blind but there wasn't enough money here to support everybody so I, I used to -- My father worked out some, he was a substitute rural carrier to.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Substitute rural carrier?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** For the Post Office?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes and then when he got done being that I took that job too and that made a little more money and I used to unload government fertilizer, get fifty cents a ton for unloading it, twenty -- forty ton car you get \$20.00 for unloading it, and if, you know if you were real lucky see the farmers had to come and pick it up at the, on the, at the station in White River here and if you were real lucky you could unload a car in a day, you could unload it in a day if everybody showed up but you'd call the people and say the, you know "I'll be there at 9:00," and some of them wouldn't show up. You had two days to unload it and if you had to wait for the second day for some guy with twenty bags or ten bags it, it was a little frustrating, you'd, you'd just, have to just wait but you, they, they always came at least when the, some of the bigger farms would come and take maybe three to five tons that would, would help out.

We had some, it was interesting I got a notice to weigh ten sacks of this government fertilizer to see if the, if the fertilizer companies were not cheating the farmers so I very carefully took ten bags and with the, there were team tracks down, you know where the freight house is as you go down South Main Street?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** I think so.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** There, there, there was a team track there and a, a car would be spotted there, you'd break the seal and go down to the freight house and report, you know you'd go open the car and whatnot but one day I got a letter from the guy said we want you to weigh ten sacks of fertilizer, so I took ten sacks and took 'em down to the freight house and weighed 'em. They all weighed a hundred pounds, set the, have to set the platform scale, put 'em up there and set the beam you know at a hundred pounds, they all weighed a hundred pounds, took 'em back, put 'em in the car, filled in the form all weighed a hundred pounds. I got a nasty letter from the guy that was in charge, "In the future you will weigh them and don't just fill out the form." The guys at the freight house said you're, you're crazy, don't, nobody else weighs it, just fill out the form have

ninety-eight pound, ninety-nine, a hundred, a hundred and one, a hundred and two, have it all, you know, vary a little bit.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh so they, they didn't think that you were telling the truth?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, and I was telling the truth cause.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Because they were all the same?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah and "In the future you will weigh the sacks," and you know the guys at the freight house they were laughing at me cause hey nobody weighs it, they, they just fill out the forms you know, you know you could fill out a form very quickly sit there and just put down ninety-nine, a hundred, a hundred and one, ninety-nine.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Did they ever ask you to do that again?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, no, to fill out, no, no.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Thank goodness cause wouldn't you've been in a dilemma then?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, but the, the freight operator was very busy, very busy, they had, I don't know, must have had thirty, forty people working there, they had cars coming all the time, trains coming, pushing, made up, weigh freight trains that go all the way up to Montpelier, they'd have a, a car they'd drop off at West Hartford, one at Sharon, one at South Royalton, one at Royalton, and you know right up through and every station agent had to do a lot with the freight but this one here was, was really good. Then they had trains go out to Canaan, West Canaan, go down through to Concord, but that besides I had, I, I worked for the railroad briefly one winter they were very for some reason short-handed and I, I was still in high school and they hired me to help shovel snow, shovel out the switches and I got a very fine Social Security number. I've got a 728. What is, is your's number 728? 728-09-2996. It's, it's, that's a Chicago number and all is, when I worked for the railroad briefly they, you had to have a Social Security number or you couldn't get paid and shovel switches out, a couple, well I don't know one or two winters.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So that's the one you have had all your life then right?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, yep.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But I, that's how I happen to get a, everybody said how did you get a 728 that; you've never lived in Chicago, no.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But that's how I got it but you know you, you'd do anything you could to earn a little extra money. We, we Windsor Brown up here hired us to help husking corn, picking corn and husking corn, didn't pay us much probably a dollar, a dollar and a half a day but, but it was money and during the Depression years, the tough years money was hard to come by and if you could earn a little bit you did.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But when I got through high school I went in the Army, came home from the Army, worked on the farm, I did pick up the job as the substitute rural carrier for my father when he retired, the rural carrier at the time could pick whoever he wanted as long as they weren't, you had to fill out a form and somebody had to say, "Oh this guy is honest," and you, you had the job. Then I, I in 1957 the Postmaster retired here in White River and I was a substitute rural carrier and nobody in the office was very interested in the job so hey, take a shot at it and I did and, and at that time you're under civil service, you had to take a test and the test was probably two hours, general purpose test and being a veteran I got five points. I had, I got ninety-three on the test, I got five points extra I got a ninety-eight which was a decent mark, in fact it was the highest of anybody that, on it and then the top three names were submitted to the town committee whichever party was in, now at that time I didn't know who was president and the republicans were in charge but the democrats controlled the Senate so Eisenhower or some of his staff or something they made a, a deal that if the State Senator was a republican you get a republican nominee and the democrats would honor it and if the Senate in New -- if the State had a democratic Senators they would, Eisenhower would accept the democratic nominee and Eisenhower was a republican and I was a republican, of course everybody in the, in the State of Vermont technically everybody is an independent, you don't, you don't register with any party but

the republican town committee met and they submitted my name for the position and I've got the certificate that's signed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Now the only other people in that same category are the ambassadors, an ambassador has to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Now of course the Postmasters they get a whole list of 'em, the President, submits thirty, forty, fifty, I don't know whatever and the Senate confirms them if they get that far but.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Somebody said the, the Postmasters at that time were appointed by the President, confirmed by the Senate just the same thing as an ambassador. In fact a Postmaster at that time could marry people.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Really?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, it was a Justice -- he had the same duty, of course they have changed that now. In 1972 the Post Office Department would phase out, the law was passed in August of '72 but it was not in effect 'til July 1st of '73 that United States Postal Service took over from the Post Office Department.

Now the Postmaster General up 'til that time was a member of the President's cabinet like the Secretary of State or Interior or Secretary of Agriculture but the Postmaster General and usually the Postmaster General was the President's campaign manager.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Probably the most famous one was Jim Farley who was Franklin Roosevelt's campaign manager and but in August of '72 the Congress changed it whereby the Postmaster General no longer was a member of the cabinet. The United States Postal Service was born July 1st, 1973 and the, the, the Postmasters, they tried to make it non-political.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But it, the interior -- internal politics are probably worse than the external.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Exactly.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well you know before you knew where the power was. Now when Jack Kennedy took over from Dwight Eisenhower a lot of republican appointees were a little nervous

and he sent the word down that you behaved and do your job nobody is going to bother you and, and he did and the same was true when Nixon took over, he didn't go around and go on a witch hunt and try to find you know ones that he could kick out but in '72 when Nixon was President and, and but it got to be such a political thing, the Post Office Department was losing money every year and many a year their appropriation would run out before the new one was in effect, so we had a few times when we didn't know if we were gonna get paid or not because they didn't have any money and it, it was, it was interesting July 1st, '73 we were reorganized and I, I remember going down to Philadelphia a big meeting down there, the regional, they had, they went from fifteen regions to five regions, and they had Regional Postmaster General and then they had districts and they had management sectional staffers.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Post Office made a, quite a, but there was, there was a lot of infighting internal fighting but we survived. I was there thirty years. I was Postmaster, I, I became Postmaster August 22nd, 1958 and it was probably one of the best things I ever did when I took the effort to take the exam, get the support and get the nomination because the money wasn't big but it was a lot better than I was making here at the farm and I, I, it was, I, I was in -- I was very interested in time, White River when, you, you know how many employees we had in White River when I became Postmaster, was fourteen employees including myself, thirty years later when I retired we had over five hundred and within our management sectional staff we had over eleven hundred employees so that there was a lot of changes, a lot of changes.

When we were down street at the old post office which was built in 1934 we'd open up around 5:30, six in the morning the first employee would be there. We'd be closed by six, seven at night and mail would all go over to the railroad station, we, we'd, mail would all come in from the railroad station, we had a fellow that used to bring the mail over, in fact he brought it over on, on a hand cart and he pushed it over, bring it over and we'd, we'd open it I think around five, 5:30 and carriers would comes in to work and it was a nice little job but then about 1960 we started expanding and we had a little temporary quarters, well you know where the bus station is, where, where, right in back of here Frank Gilman built a building, you couldn't do it today. The Fourth of

July he and two postal people David Wakefield and PF O'Connor got out there with Frank Gilman and myself and they wanted a seventy by sixty one story building and this was the fourth, third of July or the fifth, it was right at the fourth and they said, Frank said, "When do you want this done?" "I want them in it by the 20th of August." That afternoon he was digging the footings and the thing was up and we moved in the 20th of August or thereabouts, the building was I mean you, you didn't have to go to the planning board and the zoning board and everywhere else. Frank owned the land and he just put his crew to work, dug it, right off started the footings and we were, building was up and we moved in the 20th of August, and then a few years later we, they, that got too small and we moved down to where the present facility is and that had about 20,000 square feet, we bought three acres of land, should've bought ten but we bought three and we moved in there and then we've had a couple of additions since.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How -- Do you remember who those fourteen employees were?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, I think most of them, yeah, yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Are they --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Most of them are dead now.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But one or two are still alive.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Who were they?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, there was a fellow named Larry Hudson and Bill Smith were the two janitors excellent, they, they kept the place spotless.

(The end of side two of tape one. The beginning of side one of tape two.)

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** I'm in White River Junction with Harold Wright. This is the second day of taping that we're, we're doing an oral history for the Hartford Oral History Project. This is Beverly Bishop, Lasting Legacy of Stowe, Vermont, and it's September 9th, 2004. Do the second start.

So where we left off yesterday we were talking about the employees that worked for the Town of Hartford back in what year would that have been?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well at the Post Office --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** At the Post Office.



**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- in 1958 --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- when I became Postmaster the Assistant Postmaster was Tony O'Brien, Anthony O'Brien very smart person.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Very capable and he could, he could type, he could take shorthand. He'd worked for Western Union doing telegraph work and he was the Assistant Postmaster and then we had Ernie Carpenter and Harold Haverstock for two of the senior clerks, Bob Mark and Johnny Orozonto were also clerks.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Orozonto?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes, and Bob Stone and Francis Daniels were the carriers. John Martin was a rural area carrier and Pete Cavanaugh was a substitute and Bill Smith and Larry Hudson were the two custodians and they kept the building in nice shape, always clean, it was a nice building.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep. Where was that building?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** In White River across from the Coolidge. It's, after it was the Post Office when they moved out it became the court, District Court and then when they moved over to the new facility it became office space I think the Visiting Nurses had a, some room there and became office space.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. So can you talk a little bit about how the Post Office has developed over the years and that was?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, yeah, at the time when I became, I was Postmaster in 1958 practically all of our mail came by train and the railroad station was very adjacent to it and we had a fellow who used to have a push cart he'd bring the mail over from the station, he'd go over and when he got ready to send mail out he'd take his push cart and go over and leave the mail over for the trains to pick up and then he'd bring mail back, then he, at the end he had a pick-up truck he used to drive back and forth but which probably in late 1950s it stopped and we became getting more

mail from other areas as the trains came off and then in 1960s, early '60s we started having an annex in and outside of White River where most of the mail moved by trucks over the highway.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, so how many employees are there, were there when you left?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Some over five hundred.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** There were, there were five hundred and fifty, we, we had, you know when you got that many you have one today and two tomorrow and one goes, one retires, one gets transferred and we had some temporary employees, their appointments would expire and I think it was around five hundred and fifty. We had about 1,100 in the whole management area.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Now as a Postmaster how much responsibility did you have for all those people?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well you're, you're given a budget to work with, and you're given goals to meet. We had goals in productivity. We had goals in safety. We had goals in customer service, which would include complaints on service. We had labor relations goals so that you, you were pretty well covered and each goal you were expected to meet.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So but you, so did you have charge of all those people were you managing?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** In -- indirectly yes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well I guess directly they were all working for the Postal Service.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We had an, an excellent staff of supervisors that worked with me.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We had a director of mail processing who was in charge of, of all distribution. We had a, a fine labor relations director who was in charge of all the, well really labor relations.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Related things and safety, and we had customer service who had charge of all of the, in fact the customer service position became very important because they, they put in all the zip codes and the four add on zip codes so that they, they were very involved with the communities.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. I'm just gonna go backwards for just a minute because you mentioned this when I came in way back when we were talking about your youth and --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** -- what are some of the things you did for fun, something came to mind?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well after you were here yesterday and you mentioned what did you do, I, I was just thinking --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** For fun.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- we have a field right back of the house here that sloped to the north and in the wintertime and early, early spring it was excellent sliding and we'd go up there in the morning before it warmed up very much and you could slide right down across that field, had a nice, nice slide. We didn't have any ski-dos or snowmobile but we did have sleds and we used to enjoy sliding on the crust.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep and this was you and your brothers? Did any of the neighbors --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** -- come along?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They, they didn't very often come here cause they probably had hills of their own that they, they would go on.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And once in awhile we, there was a bigger hill up the road; street here and we'd go up there once in awhile.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Cause one thing you had to been careful about was fences running into a fence, you go lickety split down a hill and hit a fence you'd be in trouble.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Very big trouble.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You, you were talking about the flood yesterday and we were gonna talk about that a little bit. What are your memories?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well the flood of '27 I don't remember.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You weren't very old?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Only a year old.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** One year old.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I've seen a lot of pictures of it but I think the, the biggest thing that I can remember as far as weather thing was the hurricane of '38.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, okay, yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That would scare you to death. I mean I was about twelve years old.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And it just, it, it blew hard and it, you were scared your house was going to get blown off cause you know the wind would hit the house and it just and trees were going down of course we lost our electricity, lost the telephone, you felt sort of annihilated.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Isolated?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** You were all alone and you, we were fortunate we had some flashlights and we had some candles, lanterns and things and my folks had just barely, one of the few times they went, they went down to Eastern States Exposition and they came back that afternoon earlier than they had planned on because the weather forecast said this hurricane might come through and they got home before the hurricane started. You know Route 5 was just, you couldn't move, it was several days before they got it so you could hardly go anywhere, they didn't have a lot of chainsaws, everybody had a hand saws, and they were out cutting the trees up and it was, I don't know just how long we were without power but it was awhile.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We did milk the cows by hand.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Did you?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I don't know, I can't vaguely, I can just vaguely remember what we did with the milk, we must have fed it to the pigs probably.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Chickens would eat some milk but we, we were without any kind of electricity, without any communications for several days, it was but that night it just was scary, I mean you, you feel the house would shake and I mean oh my God and you, you didn't know what to do.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Where did you stay in the house?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Huh?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Where were you, what rooms, I mean did you go to bed or?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We stayed over at across, at our home there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Across the road?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, it was, we stayed pretty much in the main part of the house, we didn't go down cellar or upstairs or anything, we stayed but the doors on the piazza would slam you know it you just think oh man trees were going down, raining hard.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah and the house stayed intact?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yes, yes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** That's good.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Wow.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, they got those electricity back in a few days and we, we lost a lot of lumber a lot of trees blew down.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That we never salvaged.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, well being this is, this oral history is interested from the Town point of view I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about the changes that you've seen in White River and/or the Town.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** The, the Town --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Different villages?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- has grown considerably as you look at the census the population thing I think we're about the eighth or ninth largest you know Burlington, Rutland, Brattleboro and Bennington are probably bigger but we've had a steady growth for a number of years. We've had a lot of, of changes as far as municipal government, there, there was a considerable to-do when we hired a Town Manager, the first Town Manager up 'til then they had an overseer of the poor, they had the health officer, they had listers, they had, we still have the lister, they had the selectmen with the governing body and then they hired the Town Manager and, and so far we've always had male Town Manager but I guess they could have a female Town Manager just as well, I'm sure they do have some but the first few Town Managers they were probably treated a little roughly, they expected that, well some of the people that were in favor of it painted a pretty glorious picture you know this Town Manager's gonna save us a lot of money, our taxes will go down. Everything will be rosy, you know and our taxes didn't go down, they probably went up a little and, and of course the Town Manager was trying to control things, the HighHarold Wrightay Department and the, the school system was separate from the Town Manager of course, the school directors ran the school system, the Town Manager and the select, the select board were the governing body for the highHarold Wrightays and an interesting story about the highHarold Wrightay is, and way back in the early '50s, '40s, I was a ballot clerk, a justice of peace and on Town Meeting days I can remember Town Meeting was big, big, big day and everybody went to Town Meeting and then they voted to have the Australian ballot and that sort of took some of the edge off because people weren't getting elected right from the floor, people would come and vote and go home and consequently it, they abolished it, but I remember in the afternoon when things quieted down some of the older Board of Civil Authority members there was a Rachel Gordon who was a Town Clerk, Earl Raymond, Earl Robinson who was a Justice of Peace and Arthur Vansleve and telling about some of the old Town Meetings, some of the things that went on, they of course in the, in the, way back the farmers had the numbers and if they wanted it to, just use for an example they wanted to put a new sidewalk or new street lights in White River well the farmers were more interested in getting the highHarold Wrightays the roads to them repaired and

kept up in good shape and so that, some of the smart politicians they would wait to bring these, some of these things up until the farmers had to go home and do chores you see three, four, 5:00 in the afternoon the farmers had to go home and do chores so then they could pass some of these things that the village people were interested in cause they had the numbers, they didn't have to put it on a ballot or anything else, they could just get up and move that they expend "X" number of dollars on a sidewalk or street lights or whatever they wanted and the farmers back home were doing chores and that's, this, this was one of the stories that these people were talking about and they were talking about different people, how they would loBeverly Bishop to prolong a thing 'til they got to the point where they knew the farmers had, had left.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And it, it was interesting. They had, used to have the Town Meetings up where the, over the Briggs building where the opera theater is, and then it moved across to the high school where the elementary school is and now it's up on.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** It's Kate Duffy, I think.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I don't think that's anything you're interested in but it was, I, I enjoy hearing these older people tell about some of the things and, and you know we, we have politics today, we had politics then.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yes.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And there, there was, it was very interesting.

Smuggle in liquor from Canada, many ways come down on the trains they, they, they had Dartmouth College had some people that liked the little booze and they, they, they would get it on the trains usually come down through Canada, the Customs people would, they could turn their back once in awhile if they had some.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Had some money?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, and but to hear these older people telling about these, these old days when they, some of the things that happened. I wished that, you know, like you have the tape recorder, wished we could have taped some of those things, that would have been worth very much to hear some of the things.

Now Rachel Gordon's father, what's his name, what's his name, but he ran the Hotel Coolidge. He was the owner of the Coolidge and the, the Coolidge of course back in the early days was pretty prominent. In fact they ran more than a hundred percent occupancy some years.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Wow.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They'd rent the rooms to, to railroad people in the daytime, they'd come in on a train on a crew and they'd rent the room at 8:00 in the morning with the understanding they had to be out by four or five in the afternoon and then they re, fix it up and rent it again that night.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, my God.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep, so they, they ran some over a hundred percent there for sometime. Wheeler was his name, Dan Wheeler.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Dan Wheeler?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, he ran the, he was the, owned the Coolidge and yeah, the, the salesmen would be out by you no seven, 8:00 in the morning and the railroad crew come in eat breakfast and they'd have the room for the day and have to be out 4:00, 5:00 and when the salesman came back, the salesman would come in by train most of them, rent a team or horse go out, do their thing and come back at the end, in the afternoon, they would know that they couldn't get back in their room until 4:00, 5:00 and the, the VanHill was pretty sharp guy.

There was, the Coolidge Hotel was named for Calvin Coolidge's father John Coolidge not Calvin. In fact there's a room, the plate on the door that says is John Coolidge Suite or room or something and it, it was, it was a going concern there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Well let's see –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- were descendents of Major David Wright who was buried up here and I, I think I told you he was buried in a tomb that he made above ground because he didn't want to be buried alive.

**UFV:** I remember you telling me that.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But we thought, you see he had two sons that was David Wright and Bella Wright and we thought we were descendents from David Wright, Major David Wright and his son and down through on that side but we are descendents of Bella Wright on the other side. Now



Bella you might think was a girl but that's a boy and, and, and his wife and they told how they traced down to my grandfather's Seth Blyth Wright so we were, we're descendents of Major David Wright but we're not descendents of David Wright, we're descendents of Bella Wright.

**UFV:** Huh.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Which is, it, it doesn't change anything but it, it's interesting.

**UFV:** All sorts of stuff.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Changed your point of view.

**UFV:** Well, yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, it's the same, same, same genealogy.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**UFV:** You, you first heard about this project when Beverly had asked you to be a part of it. What, what was your reaction to this idea, just the idea of doing oral history of Hartford?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I think it was an excellent idea and I'm, I'm very much in favor of it because I enjoy reading the history of the town and, and some of the old happenings here, this summer went up to the center of the town and there's a marker up there and it told about some of the old things, the history of the town here and it was fun to read that, hear about it and I hope that sometime down the road our visits and things will be recorded and somebody will get some enjoyment out of it

**UFV:** Why do you think that's important, you know we all have history books where we are able to talk about you know the history of the whole country, why focus on a town?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, I, I think that the people in the town would be interested in what it was like in 2004 maybe when it gets up to 2050, now like I was talking with Beverly about when we growing up we had a lot of trains here, trains were coming and going all the time, you go to Boston several times a day the trains would go to Boston and the, the trains had a big impact on the community and now the trains are pretty well gone, we have highHarold Wrightays which have changed the, the, the economy I guess the whole atmosphere of the community. I don't, I don't think that we have quite the depth of family now as I was saying yesterday to Beverly like what did you do for entertainment, we used to have card party in the neighborhood, the neighborhood,

and today I don't think we know hardly any of our neighbors, we know some of them, but we don't know the neighbors the way we used to, we used to know everybody in the neighborhood and, and during haying we'd go and help haying, and if, if somebody got behind, if somebody got, needed help in the neighborhood we would all pitch in and help, that's gone, and if you don't see it anymore.

**UFV:** Do you, do you think that people have a sense of what the community was compared to what it now is?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I think a lot of people do have some sense especially the older families that have been here in town for several generations but we have a lot of new people moving in and it's a changing situation, now I, I was talking with I think my son was talking about somebody that they built a nice fancy home and they work out of their home their headquarters is somewhere in Connecticut but they got, you know, computers and they, they work out of their home. That's a change in environment that we have. We didn't have that fifty years ago, thirty years ago, but who knows what it will be like in another, people from as I say Connecticut, Massachusetts, where they are in the urban areas they come up here and Dean Davis, you remember Governor Davis, he made the comment one day that we've got air here in Vermont never been breathed and I think these people from down country that come up here and they do enjoy having some fresh air, they do enjoy having a, a little elbow room, they buy a few acres, they build a nice home and if they can operate their business from their home they enjoy it up here, it's a different, it's a different thing. We're, we're gonna go through this I think

**UFV:** Seems to me just from conversations that you and I have had in the past that the history of Hartford in many ways is the history of the Wright family. Can you talk a little bit --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, probably my brother and I are part of the only living direct descendents of the original settlers here in the Town of Hartford, on the mother's side it was the Gillettes who settled up in Wilder, and on my father's side the Wrights who settled right here in the area, they were both signed, signed the original charter for the Town of Hartford.

**UFV:** How proud does that make you?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, you know when somebody says do you have any roots, how deep are your roots down, they're pretty, they're down pretty deep and we're so proud of it.

**UFV:** What do you hope that your grandchildren and other people in this community will take from your experience and your family's experience helping to build this town?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well you know I, I hope that they're able to adjust to the changes and I, I think they will be all right I know that my grandson and my, one of my granddaughter's ABeverly Bishopey and, and Richard they didn't want to milk cows twice a day for a livelihood, they just have other things that are, that appeal to them. Now my two little daughters, Anne's two girls, at their age, one of them likes the animals but I think she just like animals whether she liked animals good enough to make a, try to make a living from it but I really think from the standpoint of the economy and realistic the small dairy farm in Vermont are limited, the large are gonna get larger, the small are gonna be gone, they're gonna be developed into house lots, they're gonna be developed into tree farms and some of them will be kept open but some of them will just be developed into, we can get a lot of money for our land here but we put it into the land use program so that we're not taxed too heavy and it, it's worked out very well and we don't have any intention of developing it at this point.

**UFV:** There will come a day way, way, way down the line when we don't have people who have spent their whole lives here to talk to, like I had the opportunity to talk to you about what Hartford was like in the early days, you know you said you're what seventy-seven now?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes, I will be seventy-eight in a few days.

**UFV:** A few days okay so in your seventy-eight years here you've seen a lot of history in the Town. How do you hope that once your, you and your generation are gone how do you hope that this project might help, help people understand?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I think I, I, I guess I'd have to say I hope somebody reads it and enjoys it, and say yeah, I'd like to be here for that many years, and in fact my, both my sons have no intentions of going anywhere and I don't think any of our, any of our children are going, they're, they're happy here in the area.

**UFV:** So the Wright family will, will stay –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I hope so.

**UFV:** -- part of Hartford?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yes.

**UFV:** So we talked a little bit earlier about how you hope people will use this oral history, what, what's your sense of it, how would you, if, if you were in charge how would you like to see this history preserved?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I think it, it's reasonably important that the, the next generation know how we lived and, and what we did, some of the hardships, some of the good times we had, some of the pluses and some of the minuses. No, there are no two ways about it during the, my wife and I were, grew up during the Depression years, money was very scarce, we earned money anyway we could and saved it, tried to save it to make a, a living. We were reasonably proud people that didn't want to depend on handouts or shall we say we, we'd rather go out earn our livelihood and I, I think that future generations should keep that in mind.

**UFV:** Beverly and I were talking a week ago about what a unique project this is for a town to preserve family history, families do it, we did a church in the past, why do you think it's so special to preserves a town's history, verbally, orally with the, with the voices?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well it's, the trouble, difficult to really put a finger right on but as I said before I, I think that we should be, history will repeat itself and I think the people that are coming up, I think our children and grandchildren should be looking at these things and, and thinking what can I do to make the Town stay a viable concern or viable community. Personally I don't think that we should look to see how big we can get because big isn't always better but I think we should be looking at way we can make living better for the people in the community and when I say better I don't mean fancier houses I, I, I'd rather see the school systems be good, the roads be serviceable and things that make the community better. I, I, it scares me to death some of these drug things that are going on, you know we used to think drugs happened in Boston, down in Massachusetts somewhere, but they're here and that, that just scares me to death. Our, my own family, our children our grandchildren are out there, they are getting exposed, I never was exposed to drugs, nobody ever approached me and tried to sell me some drugs, but I'm sure that

my grandchildren have probably been approached or they know where they, where they are and that, that sort of scares me. I, I'm very concerned about that.

**UFV:** Do you think something, a project like this, this oral history will help enhance maybe a sense of pride in –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** It should.

**UFV:** -- in the town people have –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** It should definitely.

**UFV:** -- in the town people live in?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And I don't think this is going to stop somebody from using drugs but I think that if the people take this and, and study it and review it and use it, it, it might change something.

(The end of side one of tape two. The beginning of side two of tape two.)

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** This works now. Something funny. I think it's okay.

I was wondering if there were any community activities that became kind of a tradition in the Town of Hartford, summer picnics or?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Of course when we were growing up they, they had a lot of local baseball teams in the summertime. We had the, the Russtown Tigers here and, and they were a community team, the, the Russtown Tigers played Enfield, and Canaan and Thetford and Ely and Post Mill and the ball field was just down the road here in where the Northern Nursery is, right down back of there they have a baseball field and they used to have local players and every Sunday afternoon in the summertime we'd have a, a ballgame. Now they, they didn't play, I, I shouldn't say every Sunday because part of the time they had to go to play at either like Thetford or Enfield, Hartland was a big rival, used to play down at Hartland and never played anything but Sunday afternoons, they, they, just Sunday afternoons they played baseball and most of the players were local boys that went and played baseball Sunday afternoon.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Well what might have been the big event of the summer?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, for myself and as I was growing up Hartland Fair was a very big event, that was about the third week in August, the old Twin State Fair was over where the, on Sikes Avenue, that was a big fair but that folded up about 1926, '27 somewhere in there, about when I

was born but then Hartland Fair came along and Hartland had a nice, nice fair. They had a lot of oxen, a lot of horses, they had a lot of machinery displayed, they used to start the fair with a parade that started up in the village and the oxen and the horses would all parade down to the fairgrounds and the fair would start, they had ox pulling and horse pulling. Then they, the fair association got old. The fair was started by the Grange and the Grange had it, I think where they, there were like thirteen directors and they had seven.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** For grangers so they always had more or less control and several of the grangers got older and a group came along and wanted to buy the fairgrounds, buy the fair and they decided the right thing to do was to sell it and they did and the Grange came out of it, they made a little money and the new owners made a lot of money, well the, they sold a lot of gravel to the Interstate, it was right behind them and, and they found some good gravel and then they sold the land to the school for, for school there in Hartland.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Which was good for all concerned.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But I think the fair was a, was a big event of the summer.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. Did they, were there ever any parades or anything like that in town, did you?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I can't -- I can remember going to some parade and I can remember my folks talking about the circus parades.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And when the circus they had some big circuses come here. They were, I, I don't know the Ringling Brothers ever came here but some other big circuses came by train.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And they always had a parade, the circus put on a parade in the morning, the morning of this thing.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And the parade was so long that it would come up South Main and go up by, well where the Polka Dot Restaurant is up to Church Street, cross Church Street, come down Gates Street and the tail end of the parade would be, they'd have to wait 'til the last of the parade went by to get back onto South Main go back down where the fair, where the, the parade, the circus was.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They had elephants, they had horses, they had other animals, giraffes, zebras, you name it but I, I remember my father and mother talking about big parade routes and then they hoped everybody would come down go up the circus.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Wild Bill Cody's Wild West Show came here and they had 10,000 people for that they say.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** My goodness.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That was before my time but that's what they say, that was, I, I can't tell you exactly when it was.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** In the '20s.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** The old Twin State Fair over here on Sykes Avenue used to be a railroad siding came right up there.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** A railroad?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Siding, where you could get on, the trains, they ran special trains from like Montpelier, they'd come to White River and the trains would take 'em right up to Sykes Avenue.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They'd come up the old, Route 5 used to go over back of the you know where 25,000 Gifts is up through there, the railroad tracks came right up to about where Route 5 is now.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And the, the cattle, they used to have cattle come by train from all around, they'd go by train from here to Brockton, Mass., there was a big show down there, and from Brockton, Mass. to Eastern States at Springfield.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep. Can you think of, we talked about, yesterday you were telling me your memories of hearing about Pearl Harbor?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, yes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** When Pearl Harbor happened you were in school?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I was, I think I was a freshman in high school and that, that was a very scary day that it, it was similar to the hurricane cause rumors would spread that the Japanese were gonna invade us and we, we had many, many rumors and I remember going to the assembly at school on Monday morning and President Roosevelt spoke and he, he said that we had been attacked Pearl Harbor and we were, he was declaring war on Japan and Germany that day. It, it was sort of a day you don't, you don't forget it, where was I on Pearl Harbor Day I didn't even know what happened 'til after it happened cause you know we didn't have the, the news things then but we heard about it the next morning on the radio, then when we got to school President Roosevelt came on, we had an assembly, all the students were in the, in the gym and he spoke to the, well he spoke to the country that he was declaring war and we had been attacked and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right. Do you remember where you were when the war ended, the day?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, I can tell you.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I was, the war in Europe ended and I was on a troop train going from Wichita Falls, Shepherd Field up to Denver on an assignment and we were on the troop train and the word got to us that the war, the war in Europe had ended and then we were in Denver and training and we were in an MP school and we weren't picked for our size but I was the smallest one there, and I was six feet and two hundred.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Wow.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh, you, you never saw so many big brawny guys and they said now don't think you're picked because of your size but then we took training there and we went to Orlando,



Florida and then we went up to just south, Alexandria, Virginia to an Army base there and when we were there we were in the taking map reproduction and photolithography and the war in Japan ended cause we'd put out a special issue of the camp news, we were, our group was, took care of, they had a camp newspaper and we, we took the, we printed a special edition you know VJ Day and, and everything happened and we, we ran this extra edition and it was free of course, but it was sort of exciting.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Took pictures of, around the camp, it was a, Fort Belvar was the name of the camp or Army base and it was just like a college campus brick buildings, permanent buildings and we had a, it was a good school. I, I never followed up on the photography work, I would, probably should've but as I said yesterday I, probably one of the bigger mistakes I ever made was I didn't take that reenlistment to go to Europe or Japan as an Army of Occupation.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Do you remember your homecoming?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, we, I came home by train and I, I, the trains, I came to Springfield, Mass. and I think either Springfield or somewhere I had called home and said I was coming home, I'd been, had my release papers you know and they, they had, you had to go through a debriefing not nearly as elaborate as today but I can understand how these people would have problems coming back into this society cause I'm sure they train 'em to kill. We were in, at Shepherd Field and we were told flat out if you don't kill him he's gonna kill you, that's your choice, it's you or him, me or you and this Army Sergeant drilled it right into us you've got to kill him, there, there wasn't any shoot him in the foot or shoot him, kill him and, and today I'm sure they train 'em even more rigid and some of these people get, you know they get that into their mind and it's hard to, we, we took a, I guess you call it debriefing, we had to go to a, classes and we had this one fellow he swore profusely, I mean he was just swearing all the time and he stopped one time just stopped he said one thing I want you fellows to all remember swearing is an ignorant man's way of expressing himself. I don't remember anything else he said but he did tell us that, that swearing was an ignorant man's way of expressing himself.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** So he must've been pretty ignorant because he swore, he swore profusely I, I mean he just.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Do you think he, was he, was he using that language to –

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I think –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** -- kind of make a point?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- probably to a degree.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** If he stopped.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I think, I think that he was, that that was his way of, of doing things.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And he had you know there was probably forty or fifty of us in his room and he just, another thing smoking he was, did a lot of smoking. It, it's cigarettes were free.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** You, you could, they, they'd give you cigarettes if you wanted to take 'em.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** When you got home who was waiting for you?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well we didn't have a big reception, I mean my father and mother were here and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And my brothers but and then I, my other brother David he was in the, he was older and he was in the Seventh Army with General Bradley and he didn't get home 'til after I did, he went through southern Europe with the Seventh Army and into Germany.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He, he was, I, I can't tell you he came back to the states, course in those day they didn't air lift 'em all over they, they came back in the boat and, and he came back to Fort Benning, Georgia and I don't think I was home very long before he got home.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Cause he, he'd been in longer, he was about three years or more, yeah, but he, you know he came, he went to Fort Benning and then he went to Europe went to England into France and across France he went sort of through the southern route the Seventh Army.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How was the, how was the Town of Hartford changed when you got back?

What is the --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** It hadn't changed dramatically.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** No.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** You know I, I wasn't gone that long.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How about after the war though and those years?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well we had a lot of veterans returning and some of the veterans went right back and some of 'em they had a Fifty-two Twenty Club you could get a \$20.00 a week for fifty-two weeks free, all you had to do was go and sign up they give you \$20.00, Fifty-two Twenty Club they called it and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Who's they?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** The government paid for it, the government and quite a few took advantage of it took a year off \$20.00 then was you know, it was probably equivalent to a hundred dollars today or more and if they lived at home with their folks they, they could survive with \$20.00, give 'em a little spending money and they looked around and some of it, it was a good thing because it gave them a chance to think you know do I want to stay on the farm, do I want to go where there's more money, do I want to go into a manufacturing job and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How about you what did you?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I didn't take advantage of it.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** No.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** No, I came back to the farm and I did go to school, GI Training Bill of Rights and I went to school to take some classes, agricultural related classes.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Where were these?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Woodstock.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** In Woodstock.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And it was quite educational I, I wish I'd had more but it, the, the time of the, the thing ran out.

**UFV:** This seems like a --

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** As far as community things they did have many community things. New Year's Ball probably at the Town Hall. I never went to one per se.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But I used to hear about 'em.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I was just trying to think of \_\_\_\_? I was trying to think of any functions. One thing that used to happen here in White River that we don't see any more and it's not the fault of anybody but some of the theaters groups would play in Boston a week and then they'd be playing in Montreal a week later but they couldn't make the connections tight enough so if some of those shows would stop here in White River and for a day or two and we had some very good shows. Now that was before my time mother and father talked about going to such and such a show that was, they, they were in the opera house there the, over the White Bridge Theater there now and they had some tremendously good shows traveling shows and the only reason they were here was because we were just in between Boston and Montreal and they'd stop.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And pick up a little money for, an interesting thing they had some horses in one of the shows now if you've been up to the Briggs Theater you know how steep those stairs are, well the horses went up all right but how did they'd get them back down.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh gosh.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well the, a horse won't go down stairs, he'll, he'll trot right up the stairs they was more ponies than they were big horses, they were small horses but they backed them back down.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** The fellow that owned them, he had no problem, he just took 'em to the top of the stairway and just sort of gradually they worked their way right back down and away they went, but if you tried to pull 'em down head first they never would come down but he just backed them down.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Just as nice as could be.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** I was thinking about your activities on, you know as Postmaster this was a full-time job plus you did farming too at the same time?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How did you handle that?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well you know it was some long days, you'd get up fairly early and I'd have to get up and get our chores well along and my brothers would, would, would finish 'em up and doing the field, most of the field work and I, I'd be here Saturdays and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah. Did your brothers work full-time on the farm?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yes, yeah and the Post Office had a pretty fairly liberal leave program, we had I think when I first went to the Post Office we had eight days of paid holidays then they added a couple more so we had about nine, ten days paid holidays plus the first I think it was first three years you got thirteen days of annual leave for vacation time, then from three to like fifteen you got twenty days and over that you got twenty-six days of leave plus the like nine or ten days of, of holidays so you had quite a little time off. Now also they had a very good policy on sick leave you got thirteen days a year of sick leave and on the annual leave you could only build up like thirty days, 240 hours, if you had, if you carried over at the end of the year more than 240 hours they took it away from you.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** You lost it.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But on the sick leave you could build up as much you could, if you weren't sick for in, in the thirty years I never used a day of sick leave.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You, never?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Nope. Couple days I, I, I really wasn't feeling very good, in fact I, I took one day of annual leave rather than take sick leave, but when I retired with thirty years they credited my retirement with all that sick leave so the, the, the thirty years of sick leave accumulated to more than a, about a year and half on top of my --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Wow.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- my service time.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep. I wanted to hear a little bit about your family and how you met Maxine and?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well we, we, she was from Windsor and I met her at a dance in Cornish, New Hampshire and we sort of liked each other from the beginning and I guess it was probably two, three years we got married June 24th, 1950 and we been together ever since.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Celebrated?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Fifty-fourth anniversary in June and we've, we've been very fortunate in many respects, we've had, we've had six normal children and we did lose Bruce, I had a third son when he was fifteen in a tractor accident which was tragic but.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How long ago was that?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Thirty years.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Thirty years.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yep and.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How did you get through that?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Huh?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** How did you get through that?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well I guess we had quite a lot of support from our friends and relatives and they I, I tell you there were two or three people that really stood out, the undertaker was very, very helpful, Morty Knight, I don't know if you know Morty Knight, but he, he was wonderful. He was wonderful.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Our family doctor was very, very understanding and, and he came and visited with us, talked with us and then our minister was good and Bruce had a, we were Protestants in the Methodist church and the Episcopal father had for some reason liked Bruce and Bruce and he were, were big buddies and they, he came down and visited with us when it was very comforting.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I, I think that he and our own minister and the undertaker and doctor, those four who comforted us, most helpful, probably one of the hardest things to accept would be at, when we had the visiting hours and at the service people would come by and say we know just how you feel, they don't know how you feel unless you've been there, you know they come up and say well we know just how you feel, people are born and expect to bury their parents.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** That's right.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But they don't expect to bury their children.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** No.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And it's just not quite the way they think.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** What was he like, what was Bruce like?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Bruce, oh, Bruce was a live wire.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Was he?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He, he was probably the, the most active of any of our children.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He was just gung ho, he, he was very avid hunter.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They had a, the year before he was killed they were hunting and they got a deer right out back here and Bruce brought it right down and he says I can't stop I got to go back we're gonna get some more and, and you know he, he was like that.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** He was like that all the time.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And then you had Richard.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Richard was the, Gail was the oldest.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Gail is the oldest.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And then Harold who works at the Gateway in the Parts Department. Harold's a, a very dedicated worker, he works at the Gateway and I, I think he wears Ford underpants.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** I mean he, he is Gateway is the, is the whole thing.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, and, and Gail is doing?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Gail has her own, she has a catering business.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Oh, here?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Huh?

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Here in this area?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Oh yeah.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Yeah, over she works out of, out of Quechee in her home and, and she does not, she's not catering big like Bloods or anything like that, but she does she has a deal over at the airport with Signal Aviation outfit there. They have jets fly in and they want fruit plates, they want this, they want that and they call Gail and she takes it over.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And, and she has some clients in Hanover.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** That they want small groups --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- catered at their businesses.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Ten, fifteen people and they you know they're having a meeting and, and they don't want to be going out --

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- to the neighborhood restaurant, it takes two hours.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** So it's Gail, Harold.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And Richard is, runs a sawmill.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah and.



**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And Anne is married to Ray Sarasos and they have two girls and then Donna who lives here at home with us and she probably is smartest as any of 'em but she never went on to school after high school she should have and she, one of these things she, she was I think third highest in her class and she had all kinds of chances but she was, she went to work part-time at Howard Johnson's up here when she was in school just loved it and met so many people and she just couldn't wait to get to work there full-time.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** And she did very well there, she had, but now she's working at the school now as an aide but she's not making the money. Anne's got a Master's Degree, and she does quite well.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah, yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But, but Donna has taken a few courses but she'll never be able to get the degrees so that you know the, the paper, the degree if you haven't got that piece of paper so to speak they, they don't give you the money.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** She works with, she, she worked several years with a lady who had, they weren't disabled or anything like they were a little slow learners, maybe a little bit –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- of troublemaker she and this other lady worked with them and they had a great time.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They, they just and they, most of these boys and girls came from broken families that didn't have much home life and Donna would go out of her way, now we took one to a basketball game one night, thrilled him, he thought that was the greatest but he didn't have any home life, he didn't have a father –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** -- and mother that he could be, Donna was the nearest thing to a mother.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** His mother was –

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** When I was talking with, about drugs and his mother was on drugs half the time and that's not a very good environment.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Right. Were any of your children interested in the farm did they?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** They were modestly not like, both Harold and Richard will help out haying.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yep.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Or something you, you know if, if I was gonna be gone they would come right in and help out but they didn't want the responsibility, they didn't want the headaches that go with farming and they wanna be, have a little more freedom, they want to go snowmobiling, they wanted to go hunting when they wanted to go, Harold ran, interested car, racing cars, he wants to go races every Saturday night, go fix up the race car which is you know well all right.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But as far as being tied down and having the responsibility of and I, I don't think there's a, a big future for a small dairy farm in Vermont, the, the economy is such that, that your cost per unit, I don't care whether your units are quart of milk, a hundred pounds of milk or a ton of milk your cost to produce that unit is gonna be higher with thirty, forty, fifty cows than it is with maybe five hundred or a thousand.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** These big, those factories they have no individuality they just they, they, they hire Mexican help.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** You have how many acres here?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** We have approximately five hundred.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** And what do you think is going to happen to that in the next twenty years?

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** Well, we have a trust, we have a trust set up it's whereby that the farm will stay and that Richard and Harold will, will, are in charge of the trust so that it, it's, it's set up so that unless something of a traumatic nature happens it will be open land here and farm land and it will, the fields will be kept open rather there be a barn or not I don't know. I was just talking with

Richard more today he's quite interested in maybe converting the dairy barn into a horse barn where they have board horses.

**BEVERLY BISHOP:** Yeah.

**HAROLD WRIGHT:** But to really get into the good stuff boarding horses you gotta have an indoor riding ring and that costs a lot of money. I think in the short-term we'll probably try to rent the first floor, the dairy part of it to a contractor, some sort, electrical contractor, plumbing contractor that needs some cold storage where he, you know gets a trailer load of wire and he's got to put it undercover, you don't have to have any heat you just have to have security.

(The tape ended.)