



Ralph Lehman
Interviewed by Beverly Bishop
October 27, 2004

BEVERLY BISHOP: This is Beverly Bishop of Stowe, Vermont. I'm working with the Town of Hartford on their oral history project and sitting today with Ralph Lehman in his home in White River Junction and it's October 27th, 2004. Ralph has been the Town Manager of Hartford for thirty-five years, and we're going to be talking to him about his life and his memories as Town Manager.

So to start with I just wanted to say that I've got, I thought of a few questions to ask you but I'd really like you to be all free to jump in and add anything that, you know, that comes to your mind, you don't have to stay with my questions, you know, cause I'm sure I may ask some of the right questions but I'll probably miss a whole bunch though.

Anyway I was wondering if you could just tell me a little bit about yourself and where, you know, your parents came from and your ancestry, and things like that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, on my father's side they were, they came over from the Germany back in the early 1900s, back in 1890, '91 and they settled in Lewiston, Maine and I still have the property that's been in the, in the family over a hundred years.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: About a hundred and I don't know, well, over a hundred and ten years, but my mother's came over in, actually in the 1920s, probably 1921 after World War I and she met my father here and they, they, they got married and had four children and I was the only boy so that's where --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Can I -- Can I ask how they met?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I think they met in a church gathering, a Lutheran background and that's where they actually, and one other thing that was quite significant about the, the city of Lewiston is there was a Italian section, there was a Lithuanian section, there was a Canadian French section, there was a German section, and so you went down the line like that and that's where they kind of segregated in groups like that, and so between that I'd say, I'd say by that's where my father met my mother.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Good. So and what about your grandparents do you, did you know them at all?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I knew my grandmother, not my grandfather.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh, on your father's side or your mother's side?

RALPH LEHMAN: On my father's side and my mother's side I, I never, I never met, met either one of them on my mother's side.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Do you remember, can you describe your grandfather?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I, I know that he had, he was tall and he had dark hair, bushy hair and he had a mustache. That's him, about the, in the picture there so on.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What about like his voice and his demeanor?

RALPH LEHMAN: His voice, it was gentle.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: See my mother went through World War I in Freiburg, Germany and of course she had, when she was shipped over, when she came to this country, came over with the idea of getting a rest away from Germany, and she, as I said she met my father.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did she talk about her life during that period?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah, it was, it was scary for the youngsters cause they never knew, never knew what they were going to do next, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Do you remember any of the experiences she mentioned?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, one, she was gonna have her First Communion and they, they had a, kind of a push into the, into the city I guess or the town, I guess it was a city and she got hurt, some kind of explosive scatter in the front of her head, but she used to keep her hair over it so –

BEVERLY BISHOP: Really.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- you wouldn't see it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was the day she was trying to make her First Communion?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yep, she ran into the church and an explosive of some sort hit, hit that, over on that side and --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Hit the church?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Boy, I would think she would be frightened.

RALPH LEHMAN: No, well her father was in the, in the German Army. He was a corporal.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Did, did anybody talk about their early married life, your parents, did they talk about where they lived and what their life was like when they first got married?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, it wasn't until, well 1939 we moved to what was known as the farm, that's where all the boys grew, grew up and my father grew up, and it was then that we stopped moving. We had moved something like seven, eight, nine, maybe eleven times. We'd move into a place and my mother would get all excited and my father would find another place to live and that went like, went like that until, course she, her, my mother didn't really, didn't get out of the

house until one time it was, and I guess it was like sixteen years that she hadn't been out, she hadn't left the house, the premises of where we lived and that was only to register to as an alien, she was an alien, she was still an alien.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Was that here –

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- that she didn't leave?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: She never left the house?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yep. She was married for what, about twenty years old, twenty or twenty-one, maybe twenty-two I, I know she passed away she, she was only sixty-four.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was in 19 -- What was that? How old would she, how, what year was that that she had --

RALPH LEHMAN: I think about 1968.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Wow. And so when you moved, were moving from place to place what was your father's work?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, he was a, he worked one place for fifty years and incidentally my wife and I have been married fifty years as of October the 18th. Yeah, my father was a, one that stayed with it and he, he gradually, he worked in the Bates Mills and started there when he was young.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What Mills, I'm sorry?

RALPH LEHMAN: Bates, B-a-t-e-s, Bates Mills and he worked his way up gradually to become head designer in the Bates Mills and that, they, they were the ones that, that put out all this clothe, the jacquard, it's called jacquard design and it's, the weaves are, are made to, so, so that they follow a color, a shuttle goes back and forth in the weaving machine and thousands of little threads come out and they go back and forth and then over above the machine is cards, and these cards have little holes in them and you can imagine how it is to design, I've seen him bring, my father bring home work and he'd dot and each one was for dirking whether it was under or over, you know, weaving.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So he was the designer ---

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- of the, the finished actual product?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But by, to do that he had to actually mark where those holes were?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah, the ___? and the weavers would have to set it up.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: They'd set up the machines, and they'd set up all those fine threads up overhead, it was quite a, quite a chore and then they had the Queen Elizabeth, the Martha Washington spreads and a lot of different ones that, it, it was cotton is what it was, they did some rayon and linen work, too.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But mostly it was a, it was a cotton weave.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Were those that, the ones that had the, the what you'd call it, kind of relief, like they had some higher threads and some lower threads so that it felt --

RALPH LEHMAN: Well --

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- it formed the pattern?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, what, what it did is there was these fine threads that came down and they would pick up that, they would pick, pick up the one thread so that the shuttle would go through it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know, and, and then the next thread might not be, be, be, maybe on the other side.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And so you, it was quick and --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. Did you ever visit or did you ever go to that mill?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, I worked in that mill when --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- during my high school days, only during the war back in, I was only fifteen and they let me in, of course I was suppose to be sixteen, but they were hiring and they couldn't find help so I got in there and I stayed there, only winters, when I was going to school and then second shift --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- I'd work, I'd go in at 3:30 and they used to let me off an hour earlier around 11, 11:00 and I was, I was still going to high school.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Gee.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yeah, and then, and then come spring I'd, I'd go outside and I'd work there in, in another place, in a cemetery that I got to know real well cause it was near, near the house within, you know, a quarter mile of the house and I, I worked there about seven years. I started there when I was around, oh probably eleven or twelve digging graves and the first grave I dug I was sad.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And I got, I got over that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Well were, probably you must have known some of the people that died?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yep, yep. Yeah, some of the well known people in town, it was an Irish cemetery.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Irish Catholic.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Does any of those stand out in your mind, I mean any particular one?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, there was one -- I can't remember whether he was a mayor or what, but there was a, also Italian and French buried there too but the real French cemetery, see Lewiston is, at one time had a population of around 45,000 and a lot of Canadian French moved in there during the, the migration period going from Canada down through and they, they must have come in about 19 -- early, about the same time immigrants started coming here in the turn of the century, 1900s and they packed most of Lewiston, there was two-thirds French at one time.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you moved from there to here in '39?

RALPH LEHMAN: No. I -- In '39 I moved back on the farm where I was only about eleven years old and we had moved that, that, that, probably ten, eleven times.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What were some of the places that you lived?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, you mean in Lewiston?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Mostly pretty nice neighborhoods, some of them had blocks in them, you know, families with ten, twelve, fifteen people in them, and my father never owned a car. He, he always walked. Even when, when we were living in that place in Lewiston, that, that one farm I call the farm now there isn't anymore because in my time it was still a, we still had a cow and I milked it during the nights, the afternoon. My father milked, milked it in the morning, in the morning and we had about seventy-five, a hundred chickens and we always had a big garden, that was the foreigners, the only thing he had to buy was salt and sugar and you know things like that, vinegar, but he had everything else there, forty apple trees and when I think, when I think of it now, you know.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. What's --

RALPH LEHMAN: What's, what's that?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Something's flying.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah, I got a few flies in here, but it was self-supporting farm, when my father was bringing, was being brought up and they could, they even had a horse, and traveled to town with the horse now and then.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. Now where was the farm located?

RALPH LEHMAN: It was right on the line between the city limits and Lewiston line and then, and the rest of it was rural farm.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that, that was for appraisal purposes.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: More than anything else.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So how long – I, I, I'm sorry I forgot. How long, how old were you when you left Lewiston?

RALPH LEHMAN: When I left I came, yeah, after I, I met, I met my wife and got, after about a year and a half, well, I'd, I'd been in the service 1950 I got drafted and, the war, the Korean War was on and so I, I, I went to Korea and got back in two years but I had a lot of training in between that time, infantry training and artillery training, and some engineer training and when I ended up, you know the thing you think you're gonna, you're gonna get into, the first thing I got into was a rifle and we got, we went into Hinshon and, and I, I said oh, after we got quieted down they had put up all these tents and stuff like that, and they started finding out where, who your background was, and they said all right you go, you go to headquarters company and you're a counter-flyer, well that still didn't mean nothing to me, but what counter-flyer was when the, when a big gun went off over in the enemy side, and we had three teams one, two, three and we'd have a, we and our mission was to locate that sound as it came across our ray, our ray was three microphones in this line, line like this, one, two, three, the longest line was the high part noose and these were the right aims, and these, and these were the arms, and you would set one of those arms on a, a metallic, well, an instrument to, to, to get an asmat (?), to get a, a direction and so you'd, you'd say we know the sound is coming from there, so we'll set this whole thing up like that and so now when the sound comes across we know the asmat (?) of this line here, and so we'd phone back this is one came from here and like say from Worthington, three teams, three teams and when, what happens is, this is a team, I was on this team here, and we, what we did is when we got, we got, we got that noise, this one, this, this one came across like that, of course this, this isn't quite right, but –

The time you'll only get one bang but now and then you'll get 'em, all kinds of them, you know, but, but to identify, it was only one bang we don't talk to each other, we just go for it, see, so we're, we're on a hill like this.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And the hills in, in Korea are high, they're not, they're, they're not real long in every ways but they're spotted here and there, and so we have our teams, we have all our teams in there, these three teams.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I can't write.

RALPH LEHMAN: Thompson Hills.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Teams that's supposed to read teams, teams.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's right.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Teams on hills.

RALPH LEHMAN: One, one of the areas we stayed in quite a while, while was Chorwang.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Chorwang?

RALPH LEHMAN: Chorwang, C-h-o-r- --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Chorwang.

RALPH LEHMAN: Wang.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- w-a-n-g.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, and on these, all these hills we have these little triangles, and we generally, we generally get, and these are the little, and now, now all these are with a, there is a wire that runs from each one of the, to the center, see that wires run all to the center, and then this comes down and what we don't do very often, now and then we can, we can see the enemy and we look out through, through the sand bags and we'd piled sand bags all the way up and we're dug down.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And the man, and incidentally a lot of these holes that were dug were dug by Koreans and, and by Chinese way back.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And now we're in them, so we get that build-up. I don't know if I got pictures of that, I don't know, but anyway each one of these have a, now see a bang from here and a bang from there, you see what's happening?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And now the third one, the men who, who comes in first, when they, when they get that in headquarters company, back, they're about six miles back and they're next to artillery.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So how long did it take you to develop all these skills? I mean that's, that, you had to have a lot of knowledge for the, to do all this.

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I, I think it was my background in, in school, see I, I hadn't been to college yet.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But I, but I'd been to high school and I, I, the mathematically I, I could geometry, geometrics I could figure that out.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And see that's, now that's the next thing, is the, the map, the maps, grid maps, like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that, this is big, big, like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yup.

RALPH LEHMAN: And they have, they have numbers like one, two, three, four, something like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And then one, two, three, four, five. I'm just putting numbers like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: I can't remember just how, how we were, how we did that, but –

BEVERLY BISHOP: So this was the map?

RALPH LEHMAN: Grid map.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, yep. So I, this is so interesting but I want to get on to the, I think I said grib.

I was curious, in your service how long were you --

RALPH LEHMAN: Two years.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Two years, and were you in Korea most of that time?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, I was only in Korea about six months and three days.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Six months and three days?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, six days, I guess.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, and of those experiences do, is there something that stands out as your worse moment in Korea?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, I would say the worse moments were when they knew we were on these hills and they would fire when we went in, when, when move, like for instance my first day there was almost the worse day I had.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Because they knew we was moving out and we was moving in and the other outfit was moving out, and so they poured in, this, this team here got most of what, what was, it went this way and the tail end of it here they didn't get too much of it, this one and this one did.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Where were you?

RALPH LEHMAN: I was in here.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And I tried to get back to company commanders and they were all gone, they were moving out and they said, one guy said to me you'll have to hang in there and good luck, and that was it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Gee, and how long did you spend on these, on that hill?

RALPH LEHMAN: Four months I think.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But you were on that, in the same place?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, wow. Do you have a memory of one of the good moments or best moments other than probably I'm going home?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But do you remember any highlights that were?

RALPH LEHMAN: Nope, no, see one other thing we did, we had mile, we had seven miles of wire that hit the roads and the roads had that many wires in them and it went back to the artillery people, of course we had infantry out with us.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And, and sometimes we found ourselves with Koreans that couldn't speak a word of English and then an interpreter would have to come along and I'd go with the company commander of the, of the Korean outfit there and, and talk to him and what the heck was it that I did one day? Oh, I sent something up to him and I didn't come personally, the commander, and he wouldn't take it and it was something nice, eats or something.

BEVERLY BISHOP: It, what was it?

RALPH LEHMAN: It was something nice.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Like?

RALPH LEHMAN: I don't know, I, must have been candy or something.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, candy, yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: But --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Were, were the same people creating these blasts?

RALPH LEHMAN: Pardon?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Were, where -- I mean these were the same people for four months, were these the same people?

RALPH LEHMAN: I don't know.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Never met any of them?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, I remember one time we had, we couldn't get a, shut this outfit up, they was, kept firing all the time, in the middle of the night and all this, you know so I said to myself there's only one thing that we're doing wrong here and that this guy has got a, a big gun that he

can roll out of a, side of the mountain like or behind it, well, in one way or the other. So headquarters outfit said well, we'll, we'll get our, our airplanes and they, they came over and boy, I want to tell you I never, I thought sure they were shooting at us, where they were letting the machine guns go, you know, and they were dropping bombs, too, but they weren't doing them anywhere near us.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And man, they got 'em.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Whoever it was they got, and they came back and when they came back in the right, somehow one of the bombs must have, must have either stuck in, in, within the apparatus or something but when they dropped it they dropped it way down in the ravine so they didn't want to go back with that, with that bomb that way.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, wow.

Now how far apart do you think this might have been?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, two miles.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, huh, wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Mile and half.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How many people were with you on that hill?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, our team was made up of about eighteen people so there was six, six and six, but one or two would, would be relieved and, and about four keep it going and they'd go back and wash up and have a R&R they called it, relief and --

BEVERLY BISHOP: How often was that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Every two weeks or.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. So would you stay for two weeks in R&R?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, well not, not all the time, they'd come back.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did anybody get hurt up there?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, we had a, I think it was our own, our own ammunition one time, somebody was firing at us and they, they were firing back with mortars and it dropped in front of one of the holes we had, we had holes in the side of the bunkers so that we could get in and out of them, but not very big, just enough to get us in and out and one, one of the guys stuck his head out and he shouldn't have, and he got his face full of shrapnel. Yeah, and then I, I got it one time but I didn't get hurt, the only thing I got was a concussion of the --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Blast?

RALPH LEHMAN: Blast, I got knocked down off my feet and, and I was traveling along a ditch line, would be six feet, five, six feet deep and I fell in that, but I was just ready to let myself down when that ground hit, kinda give me a little, well, I've had a few experiences there where we had a lot of rounds would come in, you know, in, in here and on the hillside but the infantry would get it more than we did, but unless they spotted us, you know, and I would never, I never wanted a tank, and we had a tank up there one time and that tank is all right, but it, it draws a lot of fire. We got, we got rid of that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you get mail up there?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That must have been a, a moment --

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- of peace maybe?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh yeah, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So what, what happened when you got home?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh I, I worked awhile on different projects and building stuff and putting roofing on and siding and putting up two-by-fours for buildings and stuff like that, and pouring cement, but I, I did that for about a year and a half and then of course I had met my wife and I got married and.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I forgot, where did you meet, I mean where, what town?

RALPH LEHMAN: Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, Maine.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, okay.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, Lisbon, Maine actually, yeah, and we got hooked up. I, I saw, I saw her first time she got off a bus she was working in Lewiston and it's about a six mile trip up to Lisbon, and she, and the bus lines were running then pretty heavy and she was getting out around 5:00, and I saw her and I went over and asked her for a date, her mother and father were standing there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you didn't know her?

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: You just asked her for a date?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow, what's her name?

RALPH LEHMAN: Nola, Enola, but it's Nola, she don't like the Enola.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, so then we went to the University of Maine, I got in the departments up there and finished up my undergraduate work there at the, at the university and came up here. Of course I had internshipped a summer in South Portland, Maine where the manager, where the manager was already there so I got to know how the management field was. So, yep, and then I got a call I guess from, from somebody over here, I forget who it was now, one of the selectmen, three, they only had three selectmen in those days, now they got five, and I interviewed and a week later they, they hired me, that was in July of 1959.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So your work in, to prepare you for this job?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What were, what were some of the things that you felt prepared you?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well one thing is that we have to have an engineering background so we learn to build roads and, and sewer lines and get familiar with pipes and things like that, and we got to know what welfare was, yeah, and the, and the, the categorical assistances programs that existed then and today is a lot more now but those that were there, believe or not, towns and

cities in, especially in the rural areas like in Vermont, New Hampshire didn't, they were very, say this with a, with a smile, but they were a lot of, a lot of Republican holds.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Republican –

RALPH LEHMAN: And they were –

BEVERLY BISHOP: Republican what, homes?

RALPH LEHMAN: Holds, h-o-l-d-s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Holds.

RALPH LEHMAN: They, they believed that, now no, they didn't want the Federal aid, they, no Federal government is gonna tell us what to do, you see, so when I came over they didn't have a food stamp program or, or the welfare program was, as I say the, the categorical assistances aided the blind, aided the disabled, aided dependent children, those kind of things, they weren't attended to too seriously.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Is this mostly just the town or was this the whole state?

RALPH LEHMAN: This was the whole state.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Or country?

RALPH LEHMAN: This, yes, it was all --

BEVERLY BISHOP: The whole country?

RALPH LEHMAN: Maine was like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: New Hampshire.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And they were -- Oh, that's probably the oilman.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I don't know. I think it's a town truck.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well how did you, I was curious how you felt about getting that job, and I mean when you first got the call to, that they were interested in you, how did they learn about you?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I tell you what, there was only two graduating from the university that year, Michael Hodlaham and myself and Dr. Edward F. Dow, he was the, actually he set up the management plan, see the manager plan is not understood by most people unless they really worked right with it and they educated in that field they don't know how to fix the lines of authority, you know, and whose responsibility it is to do this, this and this. A lot of times what they do is they interfere, selectmen will do that. I was very careful not to step on any of the, of the toes of the selectmen because they thought they was boss, you know, and actually, gee, I, I'm, I'm going to get into theory here but I won't, I'll be very brief. The selectmen in, now you got to remember New England is a town form of government and nowhere else in the world is it practiced but in Switzerland, yeah, so town meeting form of government was set up that, with, with the idea of controlling who was the boss. In other words there were no dictatorship here, so they set up the regular town where they would meet and decide on issues, laws, taxes.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And the, the whole bit and so and then the, the thing is that if, if you, if you picture, picture diagrams again.

BEVERLY BISHOP: No, that one's got something.

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, I got, I'll show for you here. Here's the voters, town meeting voters.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: They are called the legislative body but you say that to most people who read the law the way the Vermont law reads they, they, they don't see that there is another thing about them that, now this is the voters are in remember, now let's go back down here and selectmen.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Five selectmen, they're administrative, that make sense?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Of course take now they hire, they may not, but they may hire a manager to run their affairs, when they hire him they, they appoint him.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Appoint him. Now they lose their authority, in other words they, they don't lose it, they shift all their authority to the manager so he becomes the administrator. These people became legislative for some purposes but truly, the true legislative body is the voters, that's in the town meeting form of government. But take city council, I'll be quick, the city council, now there's a manager here, and the council is up here, and they could be, be five to nine people or they could be seventeen or eighteen depending how large the community you have and the number of wads you've got, you don't want wads unless you're gonna have, you know why, you see it?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Why?

RALPH LEHMAN: Fights, lines.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah. Now let's see, so that's, here you have a, the manager and you, you don't have town meeting form of government see, you have the voters here, the voters, see this is for south or poor, the voters elect the council, and the council, you can read that?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, so, so but with the, with the town meeting form of government that's what you came into here, I'm gonna kind of turn our attention to that.

RALPH LEHMAN: Still is that way.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, and so when you graduated there were only two people that graduated from, what was the name of the school again?

RALPH LEHMAN: University of Maine.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And, but in the management, town management form of government they taught you how to --

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How to know all this?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And prepared you for the type of administrative job that you would need?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So, so when you got the call then it wasn't that surprising because there weren't too many people trained I guess?

RALPH LEHMAN: That's right.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So what did you think when you came here and got an interview? What were your feelings back then, do you remember?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I, only that I was hoping I'd get the job.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Were you?

RALPH LEHMAN: I didn't want to get one over in Maine; I figured I'd --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Why was that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Maine wasn't paying managers the way they were in Vermont.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: I got \$6,000.00 a year when I first started and the \$600.00 for expenses, and that was, the Dr. Dow said one of our --

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

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So we were talking about the going rate for managers, so you had six, six thousand a year?

RALPH LEHMAN: 4,500 over there and was 6,000 most of them.

BEVERLY BISHOP: In Vermont.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: 5,500 and 6,000.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And six hundred for expenses?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was to move, or--

RALPH LEHMAN: No, that was mine, no 6,000, no, \$600,00, \$600.00 and I used to get, and I don't know that, but I used to get something like \$100.00, I forget what now.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I know when I was last, last was getting my salary and I, I was getting about 55,000 and 2,500 for expenses so it was \$600.00 a year and I would get 'em once a month.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So you'd divide that by, by twelve.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: \$50.00, I guess that was, that was big money.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. It still, so what, kind of paint a picture for me of what, what you came into when you were offered the job and got over here, can you kind of --

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, well, I --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Can you tell me in words what it was like?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, that was the, one thing that we, I knew was coming up and we'd get trained in it and that was sewage, sewage and storm drains, and storm and regular sewage, you know. I knew that they, Vermont wasn't moving ahead too fast at that time and they passed a law, said the town and cities have gotta do that, you know, sewer but the town, nobody was doing it and the reason why it got off the ground is because when we bought, built our first sewer treatment plant in Wilder, which is a pumping station now cause it goes to the main sewer treatment down in here, the, they're, we were probably first or second in the state and the government had built one on one of their, one of their establishments, I don't, forget where it was now but and then we, we got ours in and it was only one and we were just trying to, to abide by the law but they had a little lever on us up at there in Montpelier, and that they wouldn't give us our school aid if we didn't abide by the law so we got started and we built the first one, but there was no state aid money, there was only Federal and it wasn't until 1975 and this is how, how things worked, they worked slow, in '70, 1970 or '71 we voted to build a big plant down here, we got an advance grant from the Federal government to plan it and draw up the lines and all that, and so we did that and then when we got ready the, the Federal, the, the State government said well, we haven't got the money yet, and we're getting ready so they, they finally appropriated, it was fifty percent and eighty. No it was eighty percent and twenty, the, the first plant down there

was, was 50/50, no Federal -- no State aid, just town aid but it wasn't a big project, it was, cost like 300,000, but that was a lot of money in those days, but this one here ran almost three million, in fact when it got done it was three and a half million because we added some more projects to it, but it wasn't until say 1970 to 1975 before we got started with the project because to get the money, to get the state money.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: They, they appropriated the, the funds, see they would, every year would go by and they, they dilly-dally and finally they put us in with a lot of some other towns, I mean couple of other towns and we got started and that was the fed -- Federal aid, but now that was only one project I had but by the time I ran around the town.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well, when you first got there you had a staff? Were you the first town manager or did you, did they have others?

RALPH LEHMAN: They had four others besides, before me.

BEVERLY BISHOP: They started hiring town managers when?

RALPH LEHMAN: Back in '39, '40.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, so it had been what?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Ten, eleven years or so before you.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: They had four of 'em?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And then you stayed thirty-five years?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So what did it look like the, you know, your staff and departments and things like that? What, what was there when you got there?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I think that my first job was to, to, to line up, and get, get the welfare straightened out, and that took me a year and a half, two years but cause one thing I did convince them at the time and then I says we will try it another year, so the selectmen said sure, we'll, we'll

try it, and that was food, surplus food and then, then after that food stamps but surplus foods came along first, and they thought that, that was gonna be a big truck come in and back up and all, and I said no, I got to go up with a pick-up truck and pick it up.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Where was that? Where did you go?

RALPH LEHMAN: In, up into Barre.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, okay, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But then I, then as the years went by it did get to be a truck cause the more people learned, learned about it they was entitled to it, so that was one, one thing that brought up change, a change in, and, and the welfare, the categoricals that I told you, the different assistances, they were entitled to some, some aide, but you had to look at the families and, and see what numbers you had to deal with and you could give out your food and I used to give it out on triplicate form, it didn't have anything, I had a triplicate form, one to give to the grocery store, one for them and one for our records.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So that bill, the bill would come naturally from the store and that, that got straightened out so that people weren't complaining about, you know, not getting, being com -- completely refused because they, they, you know, they were so and so and so and so and he was a drunk, and I had a lot of that, a lot, so and that was just more, well there's no end to that, to the, to what problems you have when you'd have families that had trouble, like in this town here, a lot of people really used to be crowded over, a lot of them in the, all this, all this area here was packed with them, with welfare people and the, the people that liked the money were the people that owned the buildings, then you could blow through the walls and they let the people like that and then they send the bill for the rent, you know, that was one of the big thing and that you had to, you had to give them, give them a place, so that was, that was awful busy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Was that, I was curious, what drew your attention to that problem, I mean was there something in your background that you made you more aware of the problem with people facing difficulties in their families, or just curious why that drew your attention?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I grew up in a community that had mill workers and then they had, they had their problems too, you know, people but they were real rough, they were real rough there, were on welfare, we had a person that'd have to be starving before they'd feed 'em.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you witnessed some –

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- folks in real dire need?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did, did your family ever suffer that way?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, my father had a good job.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Fifty years in the same place, and we had our own, our own food producing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: We had two and a half acres there we could plant more than enough, well between the, the cabbage and the carrots and the potatoes and the celery, you know, I, I'd grow, I'd, lettuce and turnips I guess and the different types that, that grow in the ground, you know. We always had a, a lot of that and we had a, a sandy floor in the cellar and we used to put some of that in the sand.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And, and you could eat it in February.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Right, yep, grow food crops.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yes.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So, well from what little I have heard about your administration it sounds like that theme ran through.

Hi.

UFV: Hi there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How are you?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, hi.

UFV: Here's your meal.

(Tape stopped and started.)

RALPH LEHMAN: Why can I think of his name now, he was a doctor here in town and years ago he left about \$400,000.00 in a, in a bank, and he was said that they were to build a building of most need, that building of most need is this, is this senior center, and they built that during my time, about 1980. We had a big fight on the floor on what we were going to spend that money for, everybody wanted some different things but they finally agreed on building that and that senior center now houses, you know different activities, elderlies and needy and gives a chance to, to mix with each other, you know, and it's good.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How did it get the name Bugbee?

RALPH LEHMAN: How'd you know that? I have that here somewhere?

BEVERLY BISHOP: No but I'm, I'm familiar with the building.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How did it get that --

RALPH LEHMAN: Dr. Bugbee.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So that was his name, Dr. Bugbee?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well, as I was saying before the Meals-On-Wheels people came in, the person I mean.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But do you want to put that in the --

RALPH LEHMAN: No, I got to tell you.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- someplace, or?

RALPH LEHMAN: Got to just I'll put that away in a minute. You know I work.

BEVERLY BISHOP: You bought a hotel?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I finally decided that I would, I better slow down. Yeah, I got this thing on, I don't want to burn it up, putting it in there just to keep it warm. I don't usually eat --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Here you can come this way.

RALPH LEHMAN: Don't usually eat 'til 12:30, 1:00.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So anyway what I started to say was it seems like the theme of watching out for the poor, for people in need seemed to be a theme throughout your management years.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, all, all people.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: I, I spend a lot of time with people that had complaints that weren't complaints but satisfied them, you know to the point where, and some of them were valid complaints, real valid so I'd, I'd -- When I couldn't take care of them myself because it was ___? beyond my bounds like you know, I'd go to the selectmen and sometimes I'd put it on the agenda, sometimes I'd talked with the chairman of the board, when I, when I had three selectmen that was easy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But when I had five it doubled my job. 1975 that happened.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. When you say complaints, what's a typical complaint?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, water running in my yard and getting into my cellar.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And you know, the things like that or, or there's a tree limb that's getting into my window and it's gonna break it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And it's the odd tree.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, and lot of times it was a line tree that they put up themselves and then it grew up pretty soon. I try to tell my wife the same thing with this house here, I, I went around and started cutting trees down, and she goes you can't be doing that, you know, and the, the wall

back there started pushing in a little bit and I took and pulled all the trees out, three of them in a row, they were pushing, but see those are the kind of things that --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Something's burning I think.

RALPH LEHMAN: No, that's the, that's the, that's just --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Smoke alarm?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Is something burning?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, that will just get off, it'll sound off.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So I even heard that there was a few roofs that you worked on yourself?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That you had a few falls?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What's that about?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah. I've had one out here. I had one --

BEVERLY BISHOP: How did you happen to be fixing somebody's roof?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, well they knew that I was handy with it and stuff and I, see I was a roofer in the construction, well, in the construction area when I was younger before I was, even after I got out of the, the Army for about a year and a half, two years there and during my school years at the university I'd go and do a roof here and there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So was that part of your management job?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, no.

BEVERLY BISHOP: No, extra-curricula?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that's what I did, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So what about the other departments, like schools districts and fire department, police department, what kind of?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, our, our police, our police department had seven personnel and today they've got twenty-eight and in 19 -- early 1980 we got a grant from the Federal government to build the fire station first and the fire station was built at that time I, I think it was what, \$400,000.00 I think it was built at, and then we later voted to put the police station because we designed it so we could hook the police station onto it and we could call it a public safety building, put all the functions of public safety under one --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- head, see that's what we was, that was the idea there so that's what we did, and of course consolidation and merging was one of my background endeavors and of course we took the fire station, the one in Quechee wasn't, wasn't doing anything anyway and the one in Hartford Village was a volunteer one and it was, it was starting to lose interest and it was right out on the street in Hartford Village, in other words when you opened the door you were right on the street with the fire trucks, so we got rid of that thing and we got another grant to take, renovate Hartford Village and we did, we, we tore down a lot of buildings, yep, a lot of buildings there we tore down, and we, we help renovate some of them and that was another grant, but would never have happened had we not done that cause there was houses right up the street line and you open the door and you could nearly hit the cars going by.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So we got rid of that I'll tell you. So between that, between that and we took in the merged all the fire departments, the Hart -- the White River Junction one, the one in Wilder wasn't never, never got started and so that we had one place we'd operate our fire department out of, and that's where it is up on the hill next to the VA Hospital and it's a good sized one and it's got the police there too and it's got civilian defense, all of them, all in the same building so that's, that's a good move on our, on our part.

One of the biggest, I think or endeavors we ever had in the Town was when I rode over the roads and I did it and it happened to be in the spring of the year and I was with a couple of

selectmen and they says we got to do something with these roads, so I says, "Okay, we'll set up a ten year road program," and I went out and I took my Highway Foreman Ralph Kenyon, he, he died on me within nine years and he was a hell of a guy, he was only fifty-five when he died. But he and I went out and we measured up the most critical ones and we got those done, and I, I was, it was pretty well rolling by our sixth and seventh year we were doing two and three miles a year you know, and, and more than that, which some of them all they needed was ditching.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And we widened them and fifty foot wide and opened up the roads so that sun could get into it and that was a, quite an accomplishment in that today you couldn't do that because we withdrew a lot of gravel out of the pit behind the parking lot where the American Legion is, the VFW up in there, we drew from the south, south end of town, we drew from up in Quechee, areas up in there where you had two, Murphy pit and then, and another pit up there where we drew gravel, we were drawing gravel when we weren't, you know all the time, drawing every, almost everyday, drawing cause the, the mud season would kill us cause you go in the mud and you'd sink, school buses couldn't go out towards Quechee area, a lot of it and then, then south end of town here so, and then, then, you know whether we appointed, so we got a good, we got a good gravel program and then we started a, long winter the paving program and got these roads paved up, but we did, we were able to seal a lot of roads in those days were very cheap because we could take the tar and gravel, and the tar which they outlawed, they did, they outlawed it after we'd been, well probably seven, eight years in our, into the program and they, asphalt is the same as, as tar but the only difference between the asphalt is that it's much fussier in penetration, tar will penetrate very fast and you can sand it right away you know, and asphalt you got to wait and let it do its thing and then cause when you hold up a road we always have the road halfway open halfway closed and yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Why did they ban tar?

RALPH LEHMAN: I guess it was an oil in it that was poisonous.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh. So what about the schools, school systems, did you have any oversight of that too or?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, one year I got started up there and built a swimming pool up there, and I was going to build a track for running, I had it all drawn out and the selectmen said that's enough.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So I, I stopped on, on that one, where Radcliff was a nice guy, and I was gonna, you know we, we could do things pretty cheap in those days there and we could've got a nice track, quarter mile track.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I'm going to steal this.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yes.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Take this with me. So did it ever get built?

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: No, but the swimming pool did, right?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, oh, yeah, we put the pool in and the, and the bathhouse.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now who were the key people that worked on that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Myself, I, I had a fellow, an engineer out of, that sold pool equipment and he came out of Boston and I talked to him about, I says if you can give me the plans for the pool I says I'll take care of the plans for the bathhouse and he did and we were, we got along very good and he'd come up every so often, see what we were doing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But he sold us all the, all the piping and filtration --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- for the, for the pool.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Who were some of the people, local people that were key to your success as a manager, do you think?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I had one, two people that were not on the town payroll but they were, were regular people, just hired up as nations.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that they did all the work, couple of them.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And, and once in awhile I'd give them a man or two.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But they did, they even put up the, the building, the cement blocks.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And the roofing and the steel I got from Structural Steel up here and they put that on, the steel and put it in place and then we'd put the roof on it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What about like the, the water, where does the water come from?

RALPH LEHMAN: The water comes out of a well up in Wilder.

BEVERLY BISHOP: For, what about, I meant to serve the towns, the villages?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that's it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, okay.

RALPH LEHMAN: The Village of West Hartford just drills their own well up there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, okay.

RALPH LEHMAN: They don't have any, that's private, but Quechee has a, a good system, they drill, they got a gravel packed well like we have in, in Wilder that services Hartford Village and White River Junction, all the way around here.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now has that changed since you --

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- you came on? It was that way when you --

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- got here?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So is that water system gonna last for a while?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, that, that wasn't, that wasn't here when I got, got here, we added a lot of it on, a lot, you know the filtration system isn't, is, is something that, that when I, when I came,

first came that I started noticing yellow water and that was iron manganese so we had to, sometime in the latter part of, well, the middle of the '60s I guess we got together with the engineers out of Boston, Camp, Dresher & McGee and they designed a, a plant for that, that's what we got there today.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And otherwise you couldn't have drank that water.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: We used to get a lot of the water from a, an impound in the reservoir and it's still there, it's used more like a beauty and all that, and they fish in it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Stuff like that, but they used to get all the, most all the water from fifty percent of it from, at one time a hundred percent and then in 1950, early '50s they, they drilled that well up there, but they, they knew that there would be, was going to be a problem with elements in the, in the ground in time because water running through the ground after awhile it starts to erode stuff that's there, you know the iron and the manganese and starts flowing in and, and that's what they ended up having to do. It's, it's, by my time I said, I said to, to them, I said I had this experience in that and that I had background in college, we talked about the different elements, calcium and you know, can give you problems with water.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep. This tape is just about running out here. We got a little bit more time.

RALPH LEHMAN: Huh?

BEVERLY BISHOP: How many people did the town employ when you first came on, do you remember?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well they had a, a big Highway Department. Well, low wages, but they had, they had tried, tried to even use the welfare people and that's, that wouldn't work cause you, you have to have a certain amount of continuity, you know in working, unless you're doing just shovel work or something like that. I think we had seven people in the Police Department and then, and

no Fire Department at the time, where they had that Fire District One they had three people on duty, one each shift and all volunteers.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So that, that was seven, then of course they had elected listers which they still have, elected Town Clerk which now on a payroll as a regular, elected Town Treasurer which now on the payroll as regular, see they used to vote them salaries every year.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Boy I'm telling you, and the, the, the, they, they had another person that was like a police officer only he was elected.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So did you have a staff that worked with you at all?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, not really. I had one girl.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that one woman she worked with me for a year, a year and a half and, and got so that I moved myself out of my office and moved myself across the way into another office that used to be the manager's office anyway and, and then in doing that I had another girl that was with the Treasurer and he, she was a secretary like, but she was more than that, she was writing out bills and typing them up, I mean that's in the, the old days when everything was done by hand. There was, there was no such thing as automatic every week the payroll would come out you know, and like now it rolls out and you know you just put the figures in and --

BEVERLY BISHOP: So who was responsible for doing that, who did that?

RALPH LEHMAN: That was my duty, but --

BEVERLY BISHOP: You delegated it?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, the Treasurer did it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, so.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Who was the Treasurer back then? Who were some of the --

RALPH LEHMAN: Pud Simonds, Robert Simonds.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I was going to interview him this afternoon but his wife is not well so I'm gonna wait.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, that's right, she was, she was --

BEVERLY BISHOP: So I'm going to be --

RALPH LEHMAN: He's a hell of a guy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- contacting him later.

RALPH LEHMAN: Hell of a guy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, and, and what about some of the other officials and appointees or like who was the selectmen at that time?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, there was Byrum Hathorn, he's dead. Briggs, Fred Briggs, he was, passed away.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Is that David Briggs' father?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yep, and Joe Reed.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Joe Reed.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I think he's on my list.

RALPH LEHMAN: No, he's passed away.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Okay, there is a Reed. I don't remember, maybe it's Connie, is it Connie Reed?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, that's the wife.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, okay, yep, she's on my list. So, and then Treasurer, who was the Town Clerk?

RALPH LEHMAN: Doris. Doris what?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Were any of these long time people?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That got re-elected?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, Joe Reed was.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: But all the rest of them they put in six years and a lot of them didn't run again.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Some of them put in three years and then didn't run again.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How about the communications, I mean now you can, I mean I suppose you picked up the telephone then, but how did you communicate with your different departments? Did you have a regular time that you met with them or is it as on need?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, well, well I have the, the Highway Department as they rebuilt over up here just did, we had a nice building up there was pretty good for the time and that's where I met with the, my biggest, really my biggest concern wasn't police and fire, although they were there I could, got to handle it alright, but the biggest one was the Highway projects and the sewer.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, and who were your key people doing that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, Wesley Hazelton was, was in charge of water, but you see again I had to muscle in, he used to work for a commission, we got rid of the commission, we got rid of a lot of help.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know what I mean?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: That, because they, they would do nothing but, that they weren't progressive at all, they always looking for the, and they didn't have much money anyway.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And when it comes to getting Federal grants and stuff like that, and you know or State grants if there was any, they wasn't, Wesley Hazelton was alone for himself and probably one man and that's it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. So did you hire more staff for that then?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, of, over the years we developed sewer treatment plant they have about five extra there now and the, and the Water Department, see they're combined up, up there on the hill now and you can overlap and that was a nice thing that I was working towards which I did do and you know, we got, but Wesley I guess liked it a lot better when we didn't have to answer

to the commission cause they were elected and you never knew what you was gonna get on there --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- at that time and then what delay they were going to get, but we've seen, seen a lot of, of changes, you know in the villages and, and the, specially down in the White River Junction area that probably, that probably, probably see a few more buildings demolished and rebuilt.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. Now there's a couple of things I wanted to talk to you or ask you about, I'm afraid we're gonna run out of tape, but one of the things was the bridge that went out, what was that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, that's the Lehman Bridge.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, the, the, the thing was that everything had had usually was ten, ten years in advance, planned it and we knew we was going to put a bridge there sometime and of course that one was getting old, see the new structured bridges aren't built like the old ones with the overhead --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- strengths you know to hold the bridge up, now they got 'em high beamed, high-beamed bridges and long high beams.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And the simple, the simple bridges these are, of course these are other type of bridges require a lot of maintenance and I said you build something you got to maintain it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And if you build it, overbuild it, you know you got to maintain that overage too.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Same idea, keeping it more simple they found that out, oh, over the years they don't build those bridges anymore.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. So how, I understand, I remember that bridge went out.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep. It went out, went out twice actually.

BEVERLY BISHOP: When, when was that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, it, it went out, gosh I think it went out in '75, boy it, it, it was about six, seven, eight years difference between that, that the, the bridge that was put in was a temporary bridge to one that was for that two spans length and of course the middle pier went see, when that got washed out by, boy I'm gonna say that you know that was back in 1960 and it wasn't 'til 1970s that it washed out again but only at that time it, it took, it took another pier and when it did it, it washed everything down.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So when the first time it went out I heard there was some stories about how it actually got into, put together as a temporary bridge that had a lot to do with you?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, only that they, they wanted to, they, that they, that this is from, from the Bridge Department from the State, I was working with them to open it up in a hurry, put a temporary bridge there cause we didn't have much money, the State didn't.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And of course they were going to have 80/20 money.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: 80/20, 80 percent 20.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: So I said, well we got to do something with this bridge and so they said well, we'll, we'll, we'll give you, we'll give you help on it, but we'll put it in temporary, temporarily and then when we get the money from the Feds, see they get, now that when they got, finally got money from the Feds it was, I think they ended up 90/10, ours was ten percent and ninety Federal and State.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So how, where did, where did you get the parts and stuff to, to build that temporary bridge?

RALPH LEHMAN: It was some, some outfit in New Hampshire that brought the materials in. I can't tell you who that was now.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, but it got --

RALPH LEHMAN: Contract, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- put together with a long, long temporary wasn't that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah, a long temporary.

BEVERLY BISHOP: It lasted pretty well?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, it did.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So then when it went out the second time?

RALPH LEHMAN: Vermont State was already they'd put, they, they put the money in right after that, that next year we were, next spring and summer we was putting bridge in.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, how long was it out for so that you couldn't use that route?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I bet it was almost a year.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I remember that.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And there's a story about Lillian Gish, do you have any memories of that?

RALPH LEHMAN: I remember Lillian Gish when she came in on, I think up in Wilder when a bridge washed out up there. I wasn't around then.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, she did, she's, a picture of her here somewheres.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: I've seen it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you never met her?

RALPH LEHMAN: And she was, I think she was pointing down like that, yeah, yeah. No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: You never did meet her though?

RALPH LEHMAN: You want to --

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

BEVERLY BISHOP: At the Hotel Coolidge?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now Lillian Gish had done that, that movie that was filmed here?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was "Way Down East"?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you ever see that?

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: With her on the ice floes?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah, that's, that's what it was.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I can remember just seeing a scene from it but I don't remember.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So very famous movie?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was one of the biggest stunts of all time from what I did a little research on it.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Gosh, I can't even imagine it, laying on cakes of ice floating down the river with no helicopters that can pick you up or, or any safety things. My goodness.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: The other thing that I wanted to talk to you about though, and I wanted just to introduce this tape because it's a new tape, but we were just, I'm, I'm sitting here with Ralph Lehman in White River Junction, I'm Beverly Bishop and it's October 27th, and this is a recording for the oral history program in Hartford, Vermont and this is the second tape.

So anyway, we were just talking about an old, old movie with Lillian Gish in "Way Down East" and how she came back to, to the Town of Hartford to kind of commemorate it I guess.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But I was also gonna ask you about you, your involvement and the Town's involvement in the I89 interchange, that, you know the clover leaf and the --

RALPH LEHMAN: That was --

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- farm that got cut up, was it the Hazen farm, was it?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, they had to cut into several of the farms around and was, farming today is nothing like, what, what I'm trying to say is this that there aren't probably one or two farms, you know the big farms that are exist today and I don't particularly think that they're doing too much with cattle, and those days are gone. There was a day when the listers who came, came up with the value of the town would have to go out and get the value of the cattle in the town and that was the, what was a big chore for them, and that, in those days there were more cattle in the town than there were people, and there was about, or pretty close to, to the same amount or receded in the times, and of course today we don't take cattle in as a consideration for valuation, no added on consideration whatsoever and there, but listers used to do the same with poll taxes. They had to list the polls in the town and there was awhile when they didn't have to list the polls of women because they couldn't vote. So then, then now, now they, they don't have it, they voted that out too back about twenty years ago, but that, that was another, another time consuming because the, the, the town is, is gradually growing but it's also moving and getting the people that were in, in the hotels and motels that, that stayed there permanently you know and running around and getting, and that got to be a, a headache because you'd get 'em on a list and they'd be gone, moved, so that got to be quite a, quite a chore for the listers.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What year did the poll tax go out?

RALPH LEHMAN: I'd say right around the '70s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Was it a State mandate or, or was it just --

RALPH LEHMAN: It finally was.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: It finally was because we voted it out ahead of time.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah. Probably the late '70s, early '80s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So that, when the I89 did come through did, how, what was its affect on the town, or if there was?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, it, I, I, I think that they tried, the, the Highway people tried to not, not get into splitting farms up but there, there were some that, that were split, but their, their pastures and things like that tried to avoid getting those cut up.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did the Town have any say at all or?

RALPH LEHMAN: We had, we had several hearings by, held by the Vermont Transportation Department, they came down, in fact before they did a project they would have a hearing, they'd have the preliminary hearings and so forth, but then they'd, final design they would have another hearing to make sure that and now what happens when, when they take your land from property owners, some property owners just willingly said you know "X" number of dollars and they, property owners would go along with it, but then there was those, those that didn't and the, the lawyers had a field day actually because they, they, I remember one lawyer telling me that he, he made out fairly well because the, the arguments as to why the land was worth more than what they're taking, their offer.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So did, did it bring a lot more business or people into town, that exchange there or not?

RALPH LEHMAN: I'd say, I'd say it did. I think the hotel business, what we call the various ones in the town now, even, even I think it helped the hotel right in the middle of town, but there were several hotels built between Quechee and Hartford and White River Junction area.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Wilder. So I'd say that it, it helped the area somewhat and population, what you have today is over 10,000 people and back in those days you had about six, so you see something's there so but I think what's happening is there's a lot of homes being built.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: In the, in the Hartford area.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. I think you were here, yeah you were, must have been here when Quechee Lakes was started.

RALPH LEHMAN: I worked with them right from the very beginning.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Joe Reed and I did, we went visiting with them several times, and then finally they, after a year, a year and a half of purchasing, they came up and saw the selectmen, well although they were still telling them ahead of time what they were doing, and then they came up with the, with their plan, and of course the State came up with their Planning Departments and said we gotta, you know you've, you've gotta have something developed before you even sell, so they did.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. How do you feel about, you know their work there and how it's turned out?

RALPH LEHMAN: As far as I can see it was, it didn't happen the way they predicted it all the way, figured in about the year 2000 they'd have all, all the lots all sold and I, and I think it's, the way it is now it's, it's, it's slower but I think it's healthier.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: I think there are people moving in there that also they can afford that type of housing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Cause it is expensive.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. Has it changed from temporary, you know vacation homes to permanent residences? Somebody mentioned that to me.

RALPH LEHMAN: I would say it's, I, I, I, I wouldn't know, really know, but I would tend to believe that there are still second homes there but that there's more towards retirement people that want it for, not a second home but a home.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. How did you think it's affected the Village of Quechee and has it had a good impact, or?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I don't think it's so much Quechee that's had the impact on some types of things like convenience stores and grocery stores, I think that those came with the advent of the, of the shopping centers that you see around, and I think that took, took a lot away, also

shopping centers don't tend to have, over in the Lebanon, they don't have a sales tax so, so that means that people tend to go, even my wife has a tendency, although she does shop right here in one of the grocery stores, she goes there quite a bit but she knows prices.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: They, one thing that I think that, that attracted Town of Hartford in a lot of ways was the Urban Renewal Program that we were suppose to have from the '60 to '66 that we, we had a commission working hard and we had information provided, the Federal government gave us the money to do the planning and it never materialized because the Town voted it down on a two to one vote.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What might it have accomplished if it was voted in?

RALPH LEHMAN: I think one thing the bridge across, across the White River might have come a little quicker and some of the narrow streets might have been widened a little bit more cause we went in there right after that and widened them out.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: We took, put sidewalks on both sides of Gate Street and, and the town, one of those side streets there right in front of the church, but I, I thought that they, they, they had a few buildings there that they were going to take down but nothing, nothing real, you know I don't think they were getting out of bound on anything they wanted to keep most of the downtown area looking pretty straight but then we had to go in there and fix up, fix up the streets and of course we didn't have that kind of money that, that would ever put, would have been put in.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Right.

RALPH LEHMAN: The drainage for instance you know, we did some of the drainage work but not, not like we could have done with the, with the Federal money.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep. I was wondering in your own mind what are some, some of the memorable events that has happened over your years? That's probably too broad of a question, I know. Some of the funny things that might have happened as you were building or planning? There's a million of them but you can't think of one right now, right?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I know in, early in the '60s we got rid of our urban renewal plan, of course that, that went right out the window but I, I want to tell you something what happened next was I said we got to change the name urban renewal if you're going to get Federal money in this Town so they called it the Small Cities Program.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now isn't that, didn't they adopt that term, yeah?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, but I don't think it was because I did, but I, I was talking to a group up in Montpelier, says there's no way that we're, no one that, there weren't any towns or cities in the state that could use the word urban renewal because --

BEVERLY BISHOP: They didn't meet the guidelines?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Because of?

RALPH LEHMAN: The people didn't want to accept the New York.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know, you know that image.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's the trouble. So anyway they come out with that one and a couple years later we got the grant to fix up, that was like an urban renewal program. Hartford Village fixed that one up.

Yep, those bridges in town have always been, gonna present a problem because, because the, the maintenance I was telling you but eventually they'll get in a more stable bridge in, one in Hartford Village and one in West Hartford.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know there's two there, the one, the one in Quechee is a covered bridge that the Quechee people covered over, you know make it look, but it's, it's helped them to, it's not a short bridge, not a long, it's a short bridge not a long one but it's, it looks pretty quaint.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. They did what to it, they covered?

RALPH LEHMAN: Covered bridge.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, did they do something to restore it or something?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, they did some work on that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well you have an interesting river image here you've got how many rivers in the town?

RALPH LEHMAN: Ottaquechee, the White River, and of course the Connecticut River.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you've got lots of water all around?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And lots of bridges?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Can you remember any natural disasters that happened? There was the floods of course.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, it was that, in the '60s we had that bad flood.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. Was there any other major damage besides that one bridge?

RALPH LEHMAN: I can't recollect anything.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: A little piece of the road on 14 eroded out and we got money to fix that, that wasn't much, that was at Cascagin Avenue, so called and it was just the opposite side of the street that's probably 250, 300 feet that eroded out there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's amazing that we didn't get more.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Private, private outfits like oil outfits they got hit little bit.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Because of the water into there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Must be an interesting to get the snow out of places like White River Village the downtown area, snow removal must be –

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- a bear.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah they get, they get in there and, and early in the morning like 12, 11:00 and then midnight, one, two, three, four and they, they go, go around pretty quick.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Has that changed, is the, like snow removal has, how has that changed over the years?

RALPH LEHMAN: Not to any great degree.

BEVERLY BISHOP: No?

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well if you, as you look back what are some of the greatest accomplishments that you, you feel good about? I know that you've already talked about most of them probably, but what are the ones that stand out in your mind?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well probably the way sewage treatment was handled in the town. I think that's working out well, fairly well. We got plenty of land down there and we'll, we need any more we can always buy a little more.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: But we bought mostly all of it on the river there from this household, and I think there's only one lot we haven't, haven't bought but they're, they're not into, pressed for –

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- for, for more room and I don't know what will, will bring, what will happen in the next say twenty years as far as sewage treatment whether they'll have different processes or not.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, and the, the welfare situation?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, the welfare.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That was probably one of the --

RALPH LEHMAN: Well that's been transferred over to the State.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, but I mean it seems like that would be one of the things that you feel you did accomplish?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Those early days.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, we, we worked at, with the legislatures.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, and the swimming pool.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: The bridge.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: The roads, road plan to improve?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, this, this land that we bought, see we had --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now could you just explain that a little bit more to me because I'm not clear? When you say the land that you bought where is it?

RALPH LEHMAN: I'm, I'm going to show you in a minute I was just getting ready.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, I'm sorry, you, I beat you to it.

RALPH LEHMAN: What we did was we got a grant and when Regan got in, I don't know what happened they wanted to satisfy him or what, we got a million and a half dollars and we had the wall that you see coming down South Main Street here.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: We had that in it, and we had grants for all the people that had businesses in the town, \$8,000.00 grant.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: For all of them, I mean they could fix the shelves up and do their things and put a new roof on the building and, but when we got all done we, we exceeded that amount of money because Regan -- Now the other thing was that this, this ballpark down here, that big ballpark there you see, it's got two ballparks there and it's got a children playing ground down in there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that was all part of that project and also some of the sewage going down South Main Street and we had to hand out cutting, cutting out the mall for one thing because that, we thought, we thought that the ballpark, I don't know if you can see it here, whether or not.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Really, I guess.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's a big, nine acres.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, Bradcliff Park is named after a, a coach at, up at the Hartford High School.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: He's a hell of a guy.

But anyway we ended up, I think we had about seven or eight thousand, a hundred thousand dollars, so we gave all the packages out to the, to the store owners and other owners that had anything that was bothering them and we built the, we didn't build the park, we bought the land in the park and then later got the money to build a park itself through another agency.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: So that was what I, I thought was a real good thing cause the, the kids come down there now and, but and schools bring, bring their ballgames down here.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep. That's great.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Let's see. I have a couple of thoughts here. Now you never mentioned did you go for a graduate degree?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Where did you go?

RALPH LEHMAN: I, I graduated from Antioch.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, Master's Degree, I graduated, I started in '80. I finished in '85.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah but I had, something had happened I forget what it was, I either broke an arm or something. Oh, I know what it was now. I broke my heel. I was showing my kids how to put up a roof and, and I was just getting ready to leave to go to Maine to the university over there for August, ten days, schooling over there they have for managers and they have, have things going there, new things and I, I stepped on a plank and the plank slid and my, I had to jump off the roof and when I did I broke my heel.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, my gosh. So you, that was when you were gonna go to Maine?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah. Yeah, I used to go there every, every year.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, to refresh, get refreshed.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: In new things.

RALPH LEHMAN: They'd have a good, good program over there for managers. They don't only, only, only circle, you know, on engineering, people that don't want to get into that which they don't, a lot of them they don't like math, and they don't like --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- some of those stresses that go with it, so they take it, they take more sophisticated management courses.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. And so you graduated in '65 from Antioch, I think you said?

RALPH LEHMAN: '85.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I mean '85, '85.

RALPH LEHMAN: About twenty years ago.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Nineteen years ago. I was in, I was in my 50s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you do that because, just because you wanted to do it for yourself or was it something that was?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I just thought I want to see what's else is happening out there in the educational field.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And it was a refresher course for a lot of things.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep. Well one of the things that people have said to me is that you, you were always very approachable at practically any hour of the day.

Do you remember any odds events that might have happened that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh I, most people you know that come into the office to complain they've got a grudge and they're always on a temperament that's like you say, it's, you got to slow 'em down.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: So that they feel comfortable, you know otherwise, boy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So you don't remember any particular one that stands out incident or?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, gee, yeah, yeah, I know what you're saying I, I, I always took it you know with a grain of salt and it didn't, it didn't rub me wrong.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know cause I, I always understood you know but I always knew that I had sense there was some security that there was being detrimental to them, you know in other words endangered some security they had, that was being harmed or some way you know and usually frankly it was money.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Of course a lot of, a lot of the taxpayers would come in when did I get that bill, you know you get that from people.

BEVERLY BISHOP: You must have been on the hot seat a few times in your life.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Anything that comes to mind that was like some of the worse times, some of the most uncomfortable times?

RALPH LEHMAN: Huh, gosh, I don't know why those things would roll off on me but I, yeah, there, there was, there was people especially in that area down in here that I can think of that would, would come in and lean on my desk or sit down in the chair there and I, I don't know if I use names or not, but they were all passed away but they'd complain a lot, a lot about snow plowing, you know.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: When we were, when we were, when we were plowing snow and I remember one night a guy called my house and was about two, two or 2:30 in the morning and he said you hear that noise, I'm going to stick it out the wall – the door and he stuck the phone out there, it was our equipment cleaning up the street, yeah and that, I remember that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: He didn't like that noise?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, he didn't.

BEVERLY BISHOP: He was going to wake you up, too.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, boy.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Probably wouldn't been too happy in the morning either if, if they hadn't been out there.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, I know it, yeah, yeah. They, they think you can do that any time, you know, daytime, you, you, when the cars are gone you don't have to worry, you can clean it up pretty --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Pretty quickly?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, oh, now and then we have to get a car removed but not very often.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, the big parking lot out in back there that, where the American Legion is there they, they know enough to not park in the center or give them a warning you know and we'll, we'll plow around 'em until, until it gets so bad.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Plows will, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Then we try to contact them.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Find out what's happening, a lot of times the motors out of it or something.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, boy. So over the years did your responsibilities change at all from the things that, your duties did they change?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I, I think the load got heavier from time to time because of the, well you would think that things that we were doing like the big one that I've always thought that we established was the waste down on, I don't know if you know about that one, that's the big dumping area we have now down in south, Route 5 South, that, that area there we have a, a, a center, a center, a building built there and we have people can go there and dump, dump their iron or dump their, their copper, or waste, paper, things like that, looks like a store.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, it's, it's, it's a big, must be six, seven, eight acres there, we, we keep our, we try to dump a lot of our stuff now as far as trash and picked, picked up by the trash removal people that come around they usually go to Lebanon, they got a big area over there which they think isn't gonna be there much longer.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, boy.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now the waste, the metal place that you were talking about is that like a recycling, I mean they –

RALPH LEHMAN: That's --

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- recycle it all?

RALPH LEHMAN: That's what it is, is a recycling center and, and we take in one -- once a year we have on a weekend or Saturdays, and I think they're still doing in that, that's a special, special time because it takes in all the paints and other undesirables that you might have, and poisonous you can bring 'em there and people are trained, we have to hire a man.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And they come in and wear monkey suits like I call 'em.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: With the mask and all that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And they pick up all, all that, all that undesirable waste.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, wow. That does sound like a big accomplishment though, boy.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah that, that was, we, we had our old dump down there, you see the thing is we started with just Hartland and the Town of Hartford dumping there, and pretty soon we had all the towns around us dumping there which they still consider that as a dumping area down there, and the other, the other people that use it like Hartland I think they're the, the biggest contributor, but then you have the Pomfret areas like that, and Sharon.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

What, I was just wondering if I have mentioned the things, I mean is there something I've forgotten, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you might be remembered for?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, it probably would be, one thing I want to say is that John Brockway was a lawyer here in town and you know he, he used the town right.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How do you mean that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well I mean is he was advisor on a lot of legal matters.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: But I used them all but he was a town lawyer but a lot of times I'd have to because of a lot of reasons even lawyers have reasons that they can't take certain cases.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And but John, John stayed with us 'til he died, he died in the early, I guess early 80s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, so he was a --

RALPH LEHMAN: He was a good man.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Now I talked with a Norman Lyman and he was, wasn't he one, on the wastewater --

RALPH LEHMAN: He was waste --

BEVERLY BISHOP: -- project?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah, he was wastewater, yep. Yeah, he was right on it in the beginning.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: He stayed with it just like Wesley Hazelton stayed with it in water, they were two key people, then of course Wesley went way out of consolidation there and Wesley became the, the head of both waste water and water.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, Wesley wished he would have went to school a lot more, he said he should have went to college.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: He would have, would have, would have, I guess his boy is, is graduated from an engineering school and he's down in Springfield now. I guess he's doing pretty well down there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What is he doing on waste?

RALPH LEHMAN: Water.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh yeah, that's my hometown.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah. I don't know whether he's, whether he got a full-time job there or what, but I know he was with an engineering outfit.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. Well if you think of anything else about the town please just tell me what, you know what you remember but I would, I really would like to jump way back because I kind of missed a lot of your childhood. You said you had, you were the only boy, you were the only son?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, out of three sisters, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Three sisters.

RALPH LEHMAN: All born in April, April 9th, 10th, April 27th, and then I had a, one, one sister born July 3rd, see.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And could you tell me a little bit, I mean I was intrigued when you said your mother never left home.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Now did she go outside in the yard and work in the gardens and things like that?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, she didn't. She'd go out on a back porch, the sun came in from that side and it would, when it set, when the sun would set it would be straight in.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So she didn't go even out into the yard?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, oh she might, might have went down the steps a little bit.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Was she well, I mean?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, she had her stays when she was brilliant.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah. What was that like, I mean growing up, it's not that usual, it probably seemed usual to you though?

RALPH LEHMAN: I'm, I'm gonna show you, show you something if, if, if I can find it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So your grandmother's name was Geyer, that was her last name?

RALPH LEHMAN: G-e-y-e-r, and I don't know her first name.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow, that picture's just gorgeous.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, oval, wow, what a shame that it got taken out of the frame like that.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I could shoot, you should seen them, my grandfather he had a --

BEVERLY BISHOP: And the grandfather one.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, he had a suit, a uniform on, the German uniform.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow, and you would've had that, I mean it was the same size and everything.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That great big old wool?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, they hung, they hung up there for years in the living room and she took the, the tables and chairs, they were mahogany, they were a colored mahogany, a brownish color, he took the chairs, and he took the set they had, they had all kinds of glass and everything and all the stuff you know, and he took that and he took the long bureau like that there, and you could open 'em up, you know and store stuff in it and he sold it.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: While my --

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, dear.

RALPH LEHMAN: I forget who it was that was gone, my father.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So this is your father's mother then?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: This is --

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, no, my mother's mother.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, this is your mother's mother, and then this is your mother?

RALPH LEHMAN: That's my mother.

BEVERLY BISHOP: It says William Lanley, Lewiston who took part in the Passion Play at Freiburg, wow, so she was an actress?

RALPH LEHMAN: I guess so, I don't know. She was, she was --

BEVERLY BISHOP: This is April 18th, 1931.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: I have a son that was born on the 18th, wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: I know that she, she must have been educated because she could write but you know how she wrote, she wrote, you know how you write this way?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yes.

RALPH LEHMAN: She wrote this way.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: You know what I mean?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: The slanting.

BEVERLY BISHOP: With the slanted.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Slanting going the backward way.

RALPH LEHMAN: But you could read it, you know.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yes. It says that until coming to Lewiston six years ago she had lived all her life in Freiburg but few of her acquaintances in this city knew that they were, had among them one of the players in the most famous sacred production, it was a part of her girlhood life in Germany, and in the midst of her new interests she seldom spoke of it, or thought much about it until the news reached her that the Freiburg players were in this country and a little later that they were coming to Lewiston. Wow.

So this was back in Germany?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And it was the passion, wow, so she played in Freiburg, Germany, wow, that is amazing.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, she was Anna Justina, and her two uncles, her two uncles were here in the United States and they, they said send, send the Marx, Marx, what was his name and she sent, she went over to stay with Marx and his family and she ended up.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So in 1925 she came to this county and one year after she that –

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

BEVERLY BISHOP: The second side of this tape and at the Lehman residence and I was just talking about Ralph's mother and I was saying that back in Germany, it, it said in her, all through her girlhood she had two great ambitions, one was to take part in the Passion Play, the other was to travel and see different lands, and her father's mother who had urged her to come here to visit, that is just amazing. This is a wonderful treasure, wow. So I'm going to take a picture of that but after just.

So I was asking you about your life with your three sisters and being, being in a situation where your mom didn't leave the house at all.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And I was just wondering how that was, how, what was that like?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, I, I'll tell you she had her streaks and I think it happened when, when noise occurred, you know any, any, any noise that you made it and boy I am telling you, she'd go right into a frenzy.

BEVERLY BISHOP: She was frightened? Was she frightened by noise?

RALPH LEHMAN: She, she'd have, not, not dangerous to children or anything you know but my father would have to cool her down.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, well how did that affect your family?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, didn't, wasn't good.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Wasn't good. My sister, the youngest one who is now seventy or seventy-one, she didn't talk to my mother for years when she was in, starting in grade school, probably the eighth or ninth grade or going in, into high school, she would, she, she'd, of course father would, would always eat at the restaurant down near the mill there was, of course there was a two, two and a half mile walk back to the house, so he'd always eat there and Barbara used to eat with him.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That's your sister?

RALPH LEHMAN: She said the only way I could avoid arguing with mother is not to talk to her.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And where were you in the, in the siblings I mean?

RALPH LEHMAN: I was in the middle.

BEVERLY BISHOP: In the middle?

RALPH LEHMAN: Like, kind of my oldest sister Ruthie and then me and then Evelyn and then Barbara.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, and so when, when you were, when your mother was this way where she was staying in all the time was this at that last place, the farm or?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that's where we stayed, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And up until then she had been going out and?

RALPH LEHMAN: Somewhat.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: They have a name for that now, don't they? I can't think what it is but it's, it's a phobia.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that was.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that's right.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And so it was all through, well it was when you are a little bit older than when it started then?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well that's when we could recognize it cause what'd she do with us before is kind of push us around, she'd get us all dressed up and she was gonna go somewhere's and she'd get us in a room, would look out the window and wouldn't go anywhere's.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So, so how old were you when you, when you started to recognize this?

RALPH LEHMAN: Probably in the late '30s, early '40s.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And you were how old then, I can't.

RALPH LEHMAN: About eleven.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Ten, eleven, twelve.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, huh. So when you had to go to school did you have to find your own way there?

RALPH LEHMAN: No. Well, yeah my sisters used to get a ride in a cab and I'd have to walk, the cabs, they had, they had buses for part of the school system and then, then they had cabs, not, not cabs they were people they hired with cars that would accommodate six, eight people.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, huh. Do you remember anything about your grade school at all?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Tell me about it a little bit.

RALPH LEHMAN: Well, the, the grade, the grade school that I probably appreciated was from the second grade through the fifth grade where we were in a, we were in an area where you

could walk very short and go to school and that was Wallace School they called it, and it was comfortable, I thought three or four years that I spent there and then of course we moved, we moved, half of them we moved at the same time and moved down on the farm and then we went to Martell School they called it and that was about, about a mile and a half away from, from my house and I used to walk it and my sisters would get the ride.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Why was that?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well that, that they weren't boys.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Really?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, the girls get a ride.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, and it, it was two or three neighbors there, the boys would walk, we'd walk together.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What did you do for fun when you were that young? What were some of the --

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, we played ball for one thing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: And played some football, a little bit of that, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you swim?

RALPH LEHMAN: Huh?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you swim?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, only when I got to the ocean, I'm not, out to the, yeah, to the ocean but also to the lakes.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh.

RALPH LEHMAN: They had two, two good lakes out there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah but not near enough where you could go on your own?

RALPH LEHMAN: We'd have to take a trolley car.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's what we had in those days to travel with around town, not a bus.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: A trolley car.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Huh, and what about like sliding or did, what did you do in the winter?

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah, yeah, sliding and skiing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, we did, we did that, little bit of snowshoeing, and a little bit of hunting, and little bit of fishing.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you go with your father?

RALPH LEHMAN: Sometimes when we went for summer vacation we could do on a lake I'd go fishing and boating with him.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, now did your mom go on those trips?

RALPH LEHMAN: No.

BEVERLY BISHOP: No.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, she went to the, hold it, she went to the lake.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: So she did do something?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And, and then when you married Nola.

RALPH LEHMAN: Nola.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And you moved here, what year was that? What year did you get married?

RALPH LEHMAN: Married in '54.

BEVERLY BISHOP: '54, and then, then you moved here soon after, right?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah. After I got out of college.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Right.

RALPH LEHMAN: I went to college and started in '55 and graduated in '59.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Right, so. So did you have children?

RALPH LEHMAN: We had the girl Esther Ann was born as we went into the, the college and then, then in my third year Bill was born and then all the other girls were born afterwards, so I got three daughters and two boys.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow. So you had some, most, several of them here, I guess?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, only one is, one is near Stowe, they got a nice place up there. She married an engineer from where she met at college, Vermont College, University of Vermont.

BEVERLY BISHOP: What's his name?

RALPH LEHMAN: Eric Blaitt, B-l-a-t-t, no, a-i-t-t, Blaitt, Eric Blaitt.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And they're in Stowe?

RALPH LEHMAN: Pardon?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Did you say they're in Stowe?

RALPH LEHMAN: Not quite in Stowe.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Waterbury?

RALPH LEHMAN: They, they lived in Stowe and now they bought a place and built a place and that's very close by, you go through Stowe and then.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Hyde Park?

RALPH LEHMAN: Hyde Park.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Maybe?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, that's Hyde Park.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And then you have, so but, but most of them were born here, I mean three of them were born --

RALPH LEHMAN: Three, three of them, three of them.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Three of them were born here?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: And as a parent, as parents -- Now wait a minute I just wanted, I meant, I meant to ask you about Nola, you said we went to college so she did too?

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no she didn't cause when we had, we had that one child.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep, yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Okay. Had she worked over the years?

RALPH LEHMAN: She didn't work for twenty something years and in the last twenty-five she's been working at the school cook.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How would you rate yourself as a father? How would you describe yourself as a father, not rate yourself? How would you describe your, your parenting?

RALPH LEHMAN: I'm doing the same thing as politicians do and they spend more time out there in the, in the brush than they do with their family.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's the facts.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Is it, if there was something that you could change in your life as a parent what would it be?

RALPH LEHMAN: If I had my way, you see my father was dead against anybody drinking and so I must have been twenty or twenty-one and then of course I went in the service, but I didn't do much drinking there and I didn't do much drinking during college, hardly any as a matter of fact I couldn't afford it, but when I settled down here about six, seven, eight years later I found myself, you know always visiting people, have a drink and have a this and that, and, and got so bad that I, I had to get rid of it and I, I didn't know, the first time I went to a hospital I was only going there for a rest cause they couldn't talk to me and a person that's alcoholic you can't talk to, oh, no, no, no, it don't make sense, I've seen it happen time and time again so the second time I went, which must have been about two years later, this time I went to the VA Hospital and they had a good program there and I got rid of that. That's thirty years ago.

BEVERLY BISHOP: How did you get rid of it?

RALPH LEHMAN: Stopped drinking.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Uh-huh, did you help, did you get help?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah.

BEVERLY BISHOP: In some way?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I went to AA.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, I, I haven't been to AA in five, four, five years and that's only because I just went through this spell here I spent thirty days in the hospital.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: And that's because I had a, some kind of a mental obsession I guess, I don't know what it was, was depression is what it was and it's taking me three years to shake it off. I take pills now. I was taking thirty-two pills a day and I'm down to, I'm receding to twenty-six.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep, huh. So do you feel okay now?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah I feel, I couldn't write my name two years ago.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Almost three years now. I'm just starting to write now so.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: That's pretty scary, but it sounds like AA really played a big role?

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, we, we started the AA, big one down here, got it going in White River Junction.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: You wouldn't even know it was there.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: But people go there about three times a week.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: And it's usually opened somebody wanting to stop in, but I'm going to start going back again to help somebody else.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: I helped, I helped a lot of people to the tune of costing me money, too, which I will never do again, never do it again. In fact I got one, I got my name on a house that this guy and now he's in jail, I should have known that I shouldn't sponsor him, you know, because he, I, I, I did sponsor a lot of guys in jail cause they're, they're alcohol related and they're not really been, not really bad people they just got in the wrong place at the wrong time so I sponsored quite a few of those but I got bit by about half a dozen or so but this one guy he's back in jail again and he's got four or five kids. I gave him a place to live over, I own the house next door here, I bought that because it was twenty-five years ago and it was hell to pay, there were two families living in there and they were always fighting.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh.

RALPH LEHMAN: So I bought that and I fixed it up and rented it to him, one place and he's so treacherous that he, he kicked the guys out downstairs, they don't know it, but I do now cause he did things that made the lights go out and stuff like that.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, wow.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yeah, because he wanted the downstairs.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, wow, that's too much.

RALPH LEHMAN: Yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Well, I think I've taken way more time with you than I should've cause I, I just hope I didn't tire you, you out too much.

RALPH LEHMAN: No, no, you didn't.

BEVERLY BISHOP: But there's, you know you are just a wealth of information, and it's just been such a pleasure to talk with you and?

RALPH LEHMAN: Well there's probably a lot of things that I'm leaving out.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, yes.

RALPH LEHMAN: Cause every villager, we did things within the villages and we, we established skating rinks four, at least three or four of them I know, and of course we built the skating rink, that was a grant, we built that on the school ground and that, I don't think it went over too big with the selectmen but it was the only way we could do it and get, you know get them matching money from, from the schools rather than the town.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. I have a feeling that you were pretty good at schmoosing, I mean smoothing things over and kind of going at things in a gentle kind of way.

RALPH LEHMAN: Sometimes let, letting things alone for a while.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah.

RALPH LEHMAN: Until they crop up again.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: We had a lot of things that we initiated like, like the legal partner there in the town, we established a book of ordinances about that thick, they didn't have but two of three ordinances on the books and those ordinances were only voted at Town Meeting.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Oh, boy.

RALPH LEHMAN: That's how far back they went.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep.

RALPH LEHMAN: I think they had one or two that were street ordinances where the vehicle traffic, traffic couldn't exceed 25 miles an hour, things like that and I put them all in the booklet form and added a lot of stuff but it's not so much added, it's just rewrote it a little bit so that it would, more legally John Brockway helped me on that and we, we got it all done and I had few more ordinances in there that they didn't pass but that's because I couldn't live long enough, but yep.

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yeah, well I think I've got an awful lot of information and I hope, and I hope you enjoyed talking with me too.

RALPH LEHMAN: Oh, yeah, have you got your address and –

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yes, I do.

RALPH LEHMAN: -- telephone numbers?

BEVERLY BISHOP: Yep. Thank you very much. I'm going to turn this off now.

(The tape ended.)