

Mr. Audrey Lee: “The Mayor of Wilson”

A Conversation with Betsy and Gordon Kenneson

April 22, 2014

INTERVIEWEE: Audrey Lee  
INTERVIEWERS: Betsy and Gordon Kenneson  
PLACE: 40 Corey St., Windsor, CT, 06095  
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*This interview was conducted at Mr. Audrey Lee's home at 40 Corey St., Windsor, CT by his long-time friends and next-door neighbors, Betsy and Gordon Kenneson. Mr. Lee was born September 19, 1914 in Georgia. At the time of the interview Audrey was eagerly anticipating celebrating his upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with family and friends.*

BETSY: Today is April 22, 2014. Audrey, if you would say your name...

AUDREY: Audrey Lee

BETSY: Betsy Kenneson

GORDON: Gordon Kenneson

BETSY: We are at 40 Corey St, Windsor, Connecticut, Audrey's home. Audrey, to get us started, could you tell us when and where you were born and your mother's and father's name and where they were from.

AUDREY: Now?

BETSY: We are off and running.

AUDREY: The first thing, you have my name. Tell me you got my name.

BETSY: Yep, we got you. Now we are interested in your mother's full name and your father's full name.

AUDREY: My father's name was Henry Lee and my mother's name was Pearl Richardson. Her maiden name.

BETSY: Her maiden name was Richardson. And where were they from, Audrey?

AUDREY: Both were from Springvale, Georgia.

BETSY: And what did they do for a living?

AUDREY: Well, mostly farming. They had about 400 acres of land there and they farmed for themselves. Part of the land was... The government found bauxite on the land. People came there and cut down the trees for timber. That's what they did for a livelihood, and that's all I know that they did for a livelihood.

BETSY: What drew them to Hartford?

AUDREY: They could earn more money in the industry in the North than down in the South. They came up to aid WWI's war effort. I don't know the exact date but it had to be somewhere in the vicinity of 1913 or 1914.

BETSY: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

AUDREY: One brother and three sisters.

BETSY: Did multiple generations live together? Did your parents' parents live with you?

AUDREY: No.

BETSY: And what were your favorite family activities? What did you like to do together as a family?

AUDREY: Sit down in the evening and *eat*.

BETSY: Something not much done anymore, sadly.

AUDREY: We had a good time at the table eating.

BETSY: Now the home you grew up in is right next door to where we are today, 32 Corey Street. How many rooms were in your house?

AUDREY: You're ahead of me now, you forgot about the Hartford home.

BETSY: Oh, thank you for correcting me. Tell me about the Hartford home.

AUDREY: They moved from the south and we lived on 75 Russell Street.

BETSY: 75 Russell Street. And what was it like, how many rooms?

AUDREY: Five rooms.

BETSY: And what did it look like on the inside?

AUDREY: It was a brick structure. It had three stories.

BETSY: Do you think it's still there?

AUDREY: No, and it was owned by my father's uncle.

BETSY: Did you have a garden? Was there a yard?

AUDREY: We had a little garden beside a three bay garage that was next door to it.

BETSY: So no livestock or chickens?

AUDREY: No, no.

BETSY: Any vegetable growing or just flowers?

AUDREY: She grew a little small garden beside that three bay garage.

BETSY: And then your dad decided that that was not how you were going to be raised and brought you to Windsor. What was that like?

AUDREY: Oh, boy.

BETSY: And when was this?

AUDREY: That was in 1924, August the 4<sup>th</sup>. We moved to Windsor.

BETSY: And how did that compare?

AUDREY: It was... You couldn't compare it with anything other than it seemed like another country. Everybody had cows, everybody had pigs, everybody had chickens, everybody had a garden, and it was just out of this world.

BETSY: So not like Russell Street at all.

AUDREY: No, no. Russell Street was a place to live. The North End was a part of Hartford at the time. But other than that, it was rather disappointing to move there. I went to school four years before moving here. When I came here, my gosh! Here the schools were nothing. One of the first buildings that I met was one built about, somewhere around 1863. It had two stories to it. You could only get up to the second floor by the fire escapes on the outside. On the bottom floor there were two rooms, small rooms, with coal-fired furnace in the middle.

BETSY: Was your school called the Roger Wolcott School?

AUDREY: Yes, the Roger Wolcott School. A coal-fired furnace and a grate in the ceiling, about a 6 x 6 grate. The heat from that furnace went through that grate to heat up that room upstairs.

BETSY: Oh, pretty high expectations for that heat.

AUDREY: Oh, yeah. Alright, the other building was a newer one built right at the turn of the century. And it was better, more modern, but not too hot still. I'm going to tell you the basement had... a small basement downstairs in the cellar. 'Cuz by the time you got to the front door, the basement [bathroom] for the boys... Smelly, but that's all you had.

BETSY: How many kids were in school with you then?

AUDREY: I think there had to be no more than two to three hundred youngsters in the entire school. And I think that that's too great, too great. That was the fifth grade -- that photo there. We must have had in the fifth grade about sixty or seventy youngsters. That was the Roger Wolcott School. In 1926 or 7, the town had grown through the prosperity after WWI. One group in Windsor needed schools. So they built three new buildings, just alike, one here, one in Deerfield, and one in Windsor center behind the high school on Hayden Avenue. All from the same plan. And they were much better, more modern. And what we did... We got used to it, but at first we didn't like it at all. And when we think about what we came from! But other than those first buildings that I just mentioned, we had two WWI wooden barracks with two rooms with coal-fired furnaces in the middle of those.

BETSY: Were those for certain grades?

AUDREY: It was like a... Like a ranch house.

BETSY: But used for classrooms?

AUDREY: Yes, used for classrooms. Each one of those had a coal-fired furnace in it to heat this room on this side, heat this room on that side. And the playground? Mud! Lots of times the teachers would not let us go out for recess after a rain because if you did you would be muddy. That was what was here. This is what we didn't like at all.

BETSY: And what had you left behind in Hartford?

AUDREY: Oh, boy! I left a beautiful school. The old Arsenal School.

BETSY: And that was on Main Street.

AUDREY: On Main Street, right across the street from the North End Cemetery there. The principal was a man by the name of B. Norman Strong. Adjacent to his office we had an infirmary with a registered nurse on duty. If you got hurt or scratched yourself, she could take care of you. In that infirmary there was a dental chair. They took care of our health. They kept track of our health. In that dental chair you had your teeth cleaned free once a year. No extractions and no fillings; they would send you to a doctor downtown. The eye doctor, or oculist he was called, had a spot there. You needed glasses, you got it. He'd tell you and send you there. We also were fed. Those that were underweight were fed free about a 14 [oz.] glass of milk from Kagan Brothers Dairy that was on Wooster Street behind the school. You got that milk and two graham crackers free. If the youngster wanted the milk and the graham crackers but his weight was alright, he had to pay two cents, two cents, for that glass of milk. At certain days we had to go to this certain room and get this food. We had a physical [education] director, Smilow Livingston, who was a professional wrestler, for the boys and we had a physical

[education] director man by the name of Hertzfeld, for the girls. We had a spacious gymnasium with all the gymnastic equipment that you see. Not what you see today, but what was available then with the dumbbells and the ropes and the poles and the horse. We had regular gym classes just like arithmetic class or just like a history class every day. We enjoyed that. We also had an indoor swimming pool, the only elementary school that had one. That's what was the rich North End. An indoor swimming pool and a spacious auditorium which the other buildings didn't have. Lots of these other schools that were in Hartford... Some of the schools brought their kids to the Arsenal School to use the big auditorium for graduation.

BETSY: So BIG contrast from what you left behind and what you came to.

AUDREY: Yes. Outside the playground was crushed stone rolled down. It was there [just] fine and it didn't move at all. In that playground was a small building, all tiled, and in the inside the girls on one side and the boys on the other side. That was the latrine area. Clean as a whistle. They had a janitor just take care of that. On one of the buildings there were four or five water fountains. If you needed a glass of water while you were playing, you could just run over there and get a glass of water. These are the things we left at the Arsenal School. We came to Windsor and there was nothing even similar to that. And we were very, very disappointed.

BETSY: And you told your dad that, didn't you. And didn't he explain why he thought that move was something that you needed to have?

AUDREY: My brother and I were so disappointed until one day at the dinner table we asked my father, "Why did we move here?" We had moved and bought a brand new house. He looked at us and said, "Boys, you can't raise kids in the city." Well. I wouldn't go that far. He found out in his day that it was difficult to raise children in the city. And that we were coming up and it would be the same there. That was why he said we moved here.

BETSY: Now when you got here, what was the neighborhood and the families...? What were the families like when you arrived? Were they from different countries?

AUDREY: Most of the families in Wilson here were either Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, or Italian. A few Germans like the Beckers and the Youngs, and the other one, oh God... and the French, the Lefebvres. That's all and about five colored families. The Harris family, the Thomas family, the George family, the Lee family.

BETSY: Different Lee's than you?

AUDREY: No, us.

BETSY: Oh, your Lee family!

AUDREY: Then the next year, my father's sister bought the house next door. A family by the name of Jaworowski lived in it. He built it and that was what we found here. For recreation we had to make our own. We played baseball, soccer -- not soccer -- or horseshoes, pitched horseshoes, or ring-a-levio. There were so many vacant spaces or vacant lots for the people who had a cow. Even Becker's cows roamed from the barn up on Matianuck Avenue all the way down here. They ate their way until when it got near four o'clock they knew that they were going home. Going home to the barn to be milked.

BETSY: No fences needed.

AUDREY: They ate their way back up there every day. Sometimes when we kids were playing and the cows got home, in the barn, we'd stop playing. Several times some of us would go down and help milk those cows. Why? Because he would give us a quart of milk. [laughing.]

BETSY: So, Beckers had the cows. What did the other families do for a living? To your memory.

AUDREY: Well, most of them here worked in the factories. Fuller Brush had a lot of them, most of the people here.

BETSY: Just down the road.

AUDREY: Down the road. Fuller Brush, Underwood Typewriter, Royal Typewriter, those are the ones I remember. Colt's [Armory]. They walked to work. On a trolley if they lived too far out. What they did... You could see them every morning walking to work. They would be in little groups of three or four walking to Fuller Brush.

BETSY: When do you think Windsor Avenue got paved? There were trolley tracks first.

AUDREY: It was paved when we moved here. In fact, that was the only thing that was paved. All the rest of the streets were just dirt wagon tracks. In the winter time no snow was moved. Becker would peddle milk. He'd milk the cows and peddle the milk the next morning. The other people had sleighs with horses that would pack the snow down. The only sidewalks were on Main Street. Even Barber and Allen Streets at first didn't have any sidewalks, but they finally put the sidewalks there. Barber and Allen Street and Wilson Avenue. We didn't get any roads fixed or sidewalks any place else until the WPA [Works Progress Administration] after President Roosevelt got money and made work. That's how these roads got fixed here. But most people were interested in the town government. They had meetings in the old Town Hall. You would be surprised a few people would be there if something happened. People would ask if they could do this or do that. It was a real good community.

BETSY: Did many people have cars?

AUDREY: Very few people had cars.

BETSY: They would rely on the trolley?

AUDREY: They relied on the trolley cars. In fact the only people I can remember that had a car back then were the Dollak family [Cornelius Dollak, Wilson Dyeing and Cleaning Co.] who had a cleaning establishment on Barber Street. Or later the bakery, the bakery that was finally built in Wilson. Other than that, I'd say only a dozen families had an automobile. And just a dozen families had a telephone. Most people couldn't afford a telephone. [laughing in the background]

BETSY: What kind of other businesses do you remember?

AUDREY: Well.

BETSY: You have spoken about grocery stores in the past.

AUDREY: We had grocery stores. The first one was Peskins' [Robert Peskins] on Wilson Avenue. A small store. Mr. Bartus had a small store here. Mr. Sharshon [Fred Sharshon, Wilson Meat Market] had a grocery on Faneuil Street which finally got to be a Home Circle chain store. We had an A&P store and a family by the name of Brookman had an upscale store near Allen Street. Bloom had their grocery store there. The Brookman store was a high class store, very clean, very neat, they sold everything and they even delivered their goods for you because there were no cars. All they had were paper bags. You know you had to walk home with them. So they said they'd deliver. Very nice people. Now, Savitts had a store on East Barber Street and Shikara had a small, hole in the wall store on Warren Street. And, mind you they all earned enough with those small stores to live!

BETSY: It sounds like there were stores in walking distance just about everywhere in Wilson.

AUDREY: Everywhere we went. That's right.

BETSY: You said Beckers had the cows so that took care of dairy. There were other vegetable farmers in the neighborhood and maybe their vegetables were sold in these stores?

AUDREY: They brought them. I don't know where they got them from. You know being a child. But if they brought any they would come from Christensen farm. That is, Albert Christensen's family farm or Nan Christensen, the undertaker.

BETSY: Nan Christensen Carmon that would be?

AUDREY: Carmon. Or their farms; she lived on Wilson Avenue at that time. If they bought vegetables it was there. It was quite a community. Wintertime, we go back to wintertime -- we kids cut ice on that pond for Mr. Bartus for his refrigerator or Mr. Sharshon. We cut ice with these big saws and piled it in with hay and sawdust in the little shed and that would last right up through the summer.

BETSY: So you had an ice box when you came here?

AUDREY: They did in those stores.

BETSY: But in your house you had an ice box?

AUDREY: Yes, everybody had an ice box. There wasn't anything else. You had a separate receptacle on the top and a pipe that led down for when the ice melted. You either had a pan underneath that would catch the water... Or if it was near a window you could bore a hole in most houses and the water would come out it.

BETSY: How about that.

AUDREY: So I'm telling you people knew how to live back then. They had to find a way. They weren't given anything. They had to find a way to live.

BETSY: When did your dad get his first car?

AUDREY: He never did.

BETSY: Oh, he never got a car. But you got a car.

AUDREY: I bought my first my car in 1934. A 1931 Ford Coupe.

BETSY: Do you remember what it cost?

AUDREY: I cost me \$175.00. It was a used car.

BETSY: Where did you find it?

AUDREY: The Hartford Motor Car on Farmington Avenue.

BETSY: And how long did it take to save up for that?

AUDREY: Well just enough to get the down payment!

BETSY: [laughing] And hope for the rest! [more laughing]

AUDREY: Just enough to get the down payment. Well, as I said it was a '31. It was used and they were selling brand new for \$500.00, that's all. But it deteriorated, as all automobiles do. I paid the down payment and left the balance of \$13.00 a month. The Motor Car financed it. \$13.00 a month I had to pay for twelve months to pay for it. Well the first couple of months I was getting used to my car. When the note came due, I had the \$13.00. Well as I got used to the automobile and started going here and going there, the note came due. I got \$8.00, no \$13.00. I got to go ask my brother if he got the \$5.00 to help me pay my note. He had it because he was working. I got to make sure because I had to pay my Pop board, you don't live here free.

BETSY: [laughing]

AUDREY: So that went on and it got worse and worse, and I can't catch up at \$13.00. By the eighth month, somewhere around the eighth month, July or August, I got sick and tired of that. I vowed if and when I get out of this trick, this will never happen to me again. And to this day I vowed and it has never happened to me again. I found out and believed in what my father said: don't even want it if you can't pay for it. And I live that way, right up to today. I've never owed anybody anything. I didn't want anything... So the car got paid for. And from that time on, I bought a 1936 Ford, an eight cylinder Ford; a 1939 Ford; and I had the money. I was working. I paid for it and they were surprised when I came in and said I'll pay cash for it.

BETSY: What was your work?

AUDREY: For that time I was working for the French Cleaners and Dyers in West Hartford. You know where it is.

BETSY: Yes.

AUDREY: Out there on the corner of Raymond Road, where Raymond Road is. Because Raymond Road had a few businesses right there in the front. They had a gas station and Jack the tire expert there on that corner. A couple of small businesses there. And that's where I worked for about four years. My brother and I both worked there. Prior to buying that automobile, I was working out there and I had to take the trolley. It would take about 45 minutes, to go to the City Hall Isle-of-Safety and transfer to the trolley car to West Hartford. When I got the car I found [other] ways to come home. I vowed that I would never owe anybody and I have not!

BETSY: Now your dad didn't own a car. How did you learn how to drive?

AUDREY: No, he never owned a car.

BETSY: You learned to drive how?

AUDREY: Mr. [Anders] Christensen, Albert's father, taught me how to drive that Ford \_\_\_\_\_ and I was only twelve years old!

BETSY: Oh! [laughing]

AUDREY: We kids worked on the farm and Mr. Christensen took a liking to me. [Sometimes] we had special orders come in. We gotta get some beets and then we'd leave the barn every once in awhile (to deliver?). Now this automobile had two bars – a spark and the gas -- right by the steering wheel. And then you had three pedals, three pedals down below: the clutch, the brake and the gas pedal to guide you. This is what you had to do: give gas on that, gas faster, slow down the gas. You had to learn how to drive an automobile. Well, that old man Christensen, he let me try driving and showed me what to do and I finally got it. He said let's go. So me and Mr. Christensen would get in that car or that truck and I drove. And I was only about twelve or thirteen years old at that time.

BETSY: No driver's license needed.

AUDREY: No, to have a driver's license back then you had to be 21 years old.

BETSY: Oh, my goodness!

AUDREY: Then somehow it got cut down to sixteen. But by the time I got to be a junior in high school, being 16 years old, we finally see two or three youngsters from Poquonock [who] had a small car. I remember Barbara Hofsess had an automobile. Sid and Clifford Clark had an automobile. John (Dmitrick?) had an automobile. There were only about half a dozen cars. The kids had automobiles and they were sixteen years old. Prior to that time, you couldn't get a car or a license until you were 21 years old.

BETSY: Did you have things delivered to your house? After you came from Hartford and came here, did you have goods or services delivered here? What were they like? What kinds of things were available that way?

AUDREY: [pause]

BETSY: You talked about Beckers bringing milk.

AUDREY: Yeah, well whatever we needed we bought right here.

BETSY: How about coal? Was coal delivered?

AUDREY: Coal was delivered, yeah. My father bought twelve to thirteen tons of coal every winter to take us through the winter. That's about all he bought of services. Other services just weren't available. People then did everything on their own. You didn't have to tell them. They did what they had to do to survive. Today let the government do it. Oh

boy. People in my early days, they didn't *want* the government or they felt insulted if they had to even get on welfare. Now today, Welfare, please come to me! And they do.

BETSY: How about John Fitch High School? I know you are a proud graduate of John Fitch High School. You know all the names of your class members and your teachers. I think your feelings about your school changed a lot from the time you left Hartford to once you got to John Fitch High School. Talk about that.

AUDREY: Oh, getting to high school I was happy as a jaybird in the springtime. A brand new school. The building was only built in 1922. I got into there in 1928. That building, that old building. I loved every day I was there. I wasn't a youngster that sat around. I was doing something all the time. Anything going I was part of. I enjoyed every moment. I sang in the Glee Club for four years, I sang in the Acapella Choir for two years because they didn't have a \_\_\_\_\_ choir. I played two sports. I played soccer in the fall and basketball in the winter. That's all we had. But in the school, classes were small. We had 15 or 16 in the English class, but not when we were freshmen. Now on entering, I entered in 1928, my brother [Hershel Lee] and sister [Maxine Lee] were seniors and I was a freshman. Now in 1929 they graduated 29 students. And it was 1929! Earle Donegan was a member, you remember Earle Donegan?

BETSY: Sure do.

AUDREY: Otis, Ricky Driscoll and the Bill family, they were seniors. Walter Becker. I was a freshman. Now I can still see the headlines of the old *Windsor Herald*, "Largest class ever in High School, 110 students." Because we were freshman.

BETSY: Compared to a graduating class of 29!

AUDREY: Yeah, compared to that.

BETSY: Wow!

AUDREY: Yes, 110 students. Big headlines. Well, the junior class had no more than about 60, if they had 60, and the sophomore class has about 35-45.

BETSY: How did your class get to be so big? What changed?

AUDREY: Windsor was growing. After the war, houses were being built for all these kids. Remember I just told you they built these three schools.

BETSY: This was after the First World War?

AUDREY: Yes, this was after the first war. That was where they came from. Well, everybody talks about these youngsters in school, [but] they are quitting school. Not wanting to go to school. I found out that the percentage of youngsters that leave school

now is the same as it was then. Because when I graduated we only had 60 students, and all those 60 students were not freshmen when we came here because some of them had dropped out of school. But they dropped out for the reason to help their families. To work, to get their working papers. If they weren't 16 years old you had to get working papers from the State to take a job any place.

BETSY: What kind of work would they find?

AUDREY: The Lord only knows. Whatever they could find. Any kind of work. But they couldn't work. Now I told you that percentage of dropouts was 50% then and its 50% now. We had 110 when we entered but only 60 at the end and about 8 of them were not [always] with us. They come from other places. We had a girl from East Hartford, the Colbert girl came from East Hartford. A couple of them came from Hartford High School to be in our class. Alice Crowley came from Loomis Chaffee, Jane [McCormick] Mather came from Chaffee and also Louise Hubbard came from Chaffee. There's that 50%, they weren't there when we were freshman. So, that was the high school, and I loved every day of it.

BETSY: Now you went out to lunch. You've told me about that before, talk about that. Was lunch available there, did kids go home for lunch?

AUDREY: The high school did not have a cafeteria unless you brown bagged it.

BETSY: Was there a place that you could eat your lunch at the high school?

AUDREY: In the classroom, in the auditorium, down in the locker room.

BETSY: The best you could find.

AUDREY: That's all. [laughs]

BETSY: What did you and some other fellows do?

AUDREY: Mr. Celio on the corner of Hayden Avenue and Poquonock Avenue had a store. [Leo Celio, Capitol Market, 85 Poquonock Ave.] He had cold meats, cold cuts, pressed ham, mortadella. You could go there, buy a sandwich for five or ten cents and a bottle of soda. Some of the kids did that. I did that for a while, but that just didn't make it for me. So I asked my father...I told my father, "I gotta have food!" So he said, "What do you mean you have to have food?" So I told him what the kids ate and that I didn't like it at all. So, he allowed me a dollar.

BETSY: A dollar a day?

AUDREY: No!

BETSY: Oh, a dollar a week.

AUDREY: A dollar a week, 20 cents a day.

BETSY: OK!

AUDREY: Then, we could go down to Hemphill's Lunch. [Ira Hemphill's lunch room was at 179 Broad St.] That picture there, I can show you Hemphill's Lunch which was in the Center. We guys, there were four or five of us, Herman Neher, Tom Kelly, Bill Klein, John Dmitrick, myself, Jim Nuss, we would run down to the Center from the school and get food. We had a system. We would order today, beef stew or a bowl of soup, some kind of soup, or soda. The next day when you got there, you had "this is yours, Audrey, this is yours, Bill, this is yours." The food was ready. Because the last class ended at ten minutes of twelve and school didn't start again till half past twelve. So, all you had was 45 minutes. We had to run down, eat, and run back.

BETSY: Wow!

AUDREY: Well, we got for 20 cents at least a bowl of soup or a piece of pie for a nickel in that restaurant. Now, they had one-armed-bandits. He had a one-armed-bandit in there. You know what that is, a slot machine. And it was illegal! Every once in a while you would put a nickel in that slot machine. One time we got... all of us got lucky. We hit the jackpot, and the jackpot had over \$20 dollars in it.

BETSY: Wow!!

AUDREY: We didn't take the slugs. We gave them to Hemphill. We ate on that from that beginning because we got lucky. We finally built that little nest egg with Hemphill and we had \$750 bucks he had from us. Even when we graduated the next year, he still had about \$15- \$20 dollars of our money, but what the heck. But he fed us. Then we could really eat! [laughter] We had steaks, we had ice cream! My [favorite] dessert, blueberry pie with whipped cream! I liked it. Lo and behold, Winthrop Rockefeller came from Loomis [School] to eat too after practice. You know he played on their teams. And he always ordered just blueberry pie with whipped cream. And this was whipped cream, not Miracle Whip. And that's how we ate there at Hemphill's Lunch.

BETSY: I think you shared blueberry pie with Winthrop Rockefeller another time.

AUDREY: Yes, right in that house over there. [32 Corey Street]

BETSY: Talk about that.

AUDREY: After he graduated, he went to Yale. He went one year to Yale. I got to be very friendly with him because we had practice games over there at Loomis.

BETSY: What sports?

AUDREY: Basketball and soccer. Practice games. They had two coaches over there, Mr. Pratt and Mr. Erickson. Winthrop, I guess in their social areas he didn't see too many of our people [touches the skin on his arm] unless they were domestics or they were working on their farm or chauffeurs or something. He took a liking to me! Anyhow, he called and he was coming up. They had tailgaters, they had a football team. They had people tailgating at Loomis way back then. They had chauffeur-driven automobiles driving to Loomis, for God's sakes. These people taking all of this nice stuff. We kids, we liked to see football, so we were there. Anyway, he called and said he was going to come up and visit the school and would I like to stop and see him. I said, OK, fine. I said to my mother that Winthrop Rockefeller was going to stop by after the football game at Loomis. She thought quick and she said, "Oh, God." Then I said, can you have some blueberry pie with whipped cream. She said, "You go up to Sharshon's and get a can of blueberries and a jar of heavy cream." She prepared all this blueberry pie. Not just an ordinary thin pie, but a deep pan pie, one like that. [gestures with his hands] You cook -- you know what. Sure enough, the game was over, he came. We had this blueberry pie with whipped cream. He ate *half!*

BETSY and GORDON: [laughter]

AUDREY: I think he's still thanking my mother!

BETSY and GORDON: [more laughter]

AUDREY: Alright, well I didn't see him anymore. He didn't go back to Yale for the second year, sophomore [year]. Of course the press wanted to know why he wasn't there, why he did he leave Yale? And this is what he said. I'm going to try to repeat it pretty much verbatim. "My future is assured and there is no reason I should occupy a seat here when there are people less fortunate than me that can use it." Now, you've got to be a man to say something like that. But then he didn't help himself very much, because then his wild oats caught up with him. And he was here, there, and everywhere. He finally married a girl from West Virginia. But they [her family] were not their class and I understand that they paid that girl off because it just didn't take.

BETSY: Oops!

AUDREY: I don't remember what her name was. But anyhow, then he left and that creed for the Roosevelt's, the Kennedy's, the Harriman's, all those rich people -- they had to do community work. That's why they are all in politics. So, he went to Arkansas. And Arkansas was about the poorest state in the union. With all their connections, he got to doing political work, he got to be a mayor, and eventually he got to be the Governor of Arkansas. He had his own little ranch, the Wind Ranch [Winrock Farms] was the name of it. I don't know about his family or what happened to the ranch. But that was Winthrop. He was quite a guy. If you want to see how wealthy they are, you just go across the river,

up the Hudson River where the Roosevelts lived, and the Rockefellers lived up there. They own half that mountain up there. And they own a golf course of their own with art work on the fairways. Those are wealthy people. Well, that was Winthrop. Well, as I said, he did all right. He fixed it up. Apparently, Clinton came up there and reaped the harvest of what Winthrop had done. But it wasn't that much because Clinton must have been a smart man anyhow because he was a Rhodes Scholar. So he had something up here [gestures to his head] anyway. That was all ready for him when he got there. Well, that's about all I can tell you.

BETSY: Well, you mentioned golf. How about Keney Park? You seemed to remember, I think, when Keney Park put their golf course in. What can you say about that?

AUDREY: Keney Park was built somewhere around 1927 or 1928.

BETSY: You were still in high school.

AUDREY: That's right, high school. They had the dynamite. It was all wooded. We could hear the boom, boom, boom. They didn't have the equipment to pull the trees out, cut the trees down, so they'd dynamite these big trees to make the golf course. After it was built, I was there when it was dedicated with Walter Batterson who was the mayor of Hartford. We kids did because Bill Klein, Jim Nuss, Bill Galvin... they got to be caddies there. I went there to be a caddy too, but Jim (Hardy?), wouldn't have me as a caddy. So, that was how it got built. Well, I didn't play right away, because at first they didn't want my people to play on a public golf course until the ministers of the churches in Hartford raised Cain. Then they opened it up for us dark-skinned kids to play golf there.

BETSY: When would that have been?

AUDREY: About 1932, to 1933.

BETSY: When you got out of high school, was it to go into the work force or to another...?

AUDREY: I got out of high school, no job. Nobody had a job, they weren't hiring. That was the Depression. 1932 and it had started in 1929. No one had a job and you couldn't find a job anyplace. That's why Jim Motyl who lived up the street here -- we went to enlist in the Army. Well, they took Jim, but they didn't take me. They told me I would have to go to New York or Atlanta and enlist in a colored outfit. That I wasn't going to do. But Jim stayed and he made the military his life's work and he rose to be a full colonel, he did.

BETSY: You did get into the military later, but before that you were involved in the WPA?

AUDREY: I was in the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC.

BETSY: Yes, excuse me, the CCC. Talk about that.

AUDREY: I attempted to enlist in the Civilian Conservation Corps after President Roosevelt made it. We went down there to Mrs. Williams who was the tax collector for the Wilson Fire District. She had charge of the enrollees. Each town was allocated just so many people. Windsor had seven who could go. Well, we didn't know that. Myself, Bill Vaney, (Babe?) Murray...

BETSY: Babe Murray went on to be the police chief of Windsor.

AUDREY: Murray was Bill Vanney's brother-in-law. That's how he got on the force. Well, he, Leon, and Chris who lived on one of the streets right here, Clarence Whipple, Moise Lenard from Poquonock, we tried to go in. Mrs. Williams said I can't enroll you because the focus was on welfare patients. Well, Windsor didn't have any welfare patients. She said that they said that we could have seven people, so I'll see if I can get you boys in there. Being the politician that she was, she talked to someone and then called us back and said we could come back and enroll. That's how I got in there.

BETSY: Where were you sent?

AUDREY: First, I was sent to Fishers Island [NY], then we got our needles and our \_\_\_\_\_, then they moved us to Cornwall, Connecticut.

BETSY: What projects did you work on?

AUDREY: I got to be the company clerk. Now if you want to see that camp... [he pulls out a different scrapbook]

BETSY: Unbelievable. What was the Corps building out there? What was the work?

AUDREY: Oh, the boys... they had cleared the Housatonic Meadows State Park and the one in Sharon and the one in Kent. Here we are in tents. That's at Fishers Island. That is Bill Vanney right there and that's \_\_\_\_\_ Lindquist. This is the company street. Now this is the covered bridge. You've seen it there in Cornwall. Now, I didn't have a job too much, just hanging around. Austin Hawes, the state forester, he had charge of the work details. One day the Captain of the place (the military ran that place), said to me Audrey, I see that you had some business training in school. I said yeah, I did. He said I'm looking for a clerk. He had tried two or three youngsters but they just didn't work out. He said would you like to try for that job? I jumped at the chance. He said you report to my office, which was a tent. [laughter] They were building one barracks then. He told me what to do, what was necessary. Check with Mr. Hawes to see how many men are needed to go to Sharon State Park to work, or to Mohawk State Park, or Kent State Park. Now they were eight to ten miles away. Now they are not going to come home for dinner. You had to bring dinner to them [out at the work site]. You had to get a truck and make sure to

tell the cook you needed twenty meals to [take to] this one and twenty meal to that one. I did a lot of that. I had to make out the payroll. I had to do everything. So after about two weeks, the captain said Audrey, where are you sleeping? I said down there in tent number eight. He said get all your gear and bring it up here and I'm going to have the carpenter put you a rack right here in this office. Well, that job you are doing is 24 hours a day. You are on duty 24 hours a day. So that's what he did. My bunk and my clothes were right there in that office with the typewriter and what have you. I practically ran the place!

BETSY: How many years did you stay there?

AUDREY: I only stayed there six months. That was temporary. I still had to find a job. When I told them I found a job... my brother found a job for me. When I told the Captain I was going to leave.... Oh boy, he almost cried. He said I just get somebody I can depend on and you're going to leave me. He let it go at that. When you were doing payroll to pay these guys... Military payroll got every column you could think of. Because all the stuff that they gave you, you better have it when you had an inspection. So, that was the same way there. You better have everything listed. If you had clothes that were worn out you could get it replaced for free. If it wasn't listed you had to pay. I had to make out that payroll and pay the guys for payday. All for \$30.00 a month.

BETSY: Did you send it home?

AUDREY: \$25.00 *had* to come home. You got \$5.00. This was a basic unit. You got \$5.00 and your family got \$25.00. Well, Pops didn't take my money. He saved it and took the money and he bought that lot here for \$150.00 bucks.

BETSY: Wow, so that's the lot that you built the house on that we're sitting in this afternoon.

AUDREY: That's right. That was the CCC. Well, came time to leave. It was in the fall of the year. To think back... to me... I did the wrong thing. The captain didn't want me to go. When I left that day, he bid me goodbye and shook my hand, then he handed me an envelope with a letter of recommendation which is in that scrapbook right there. He said, here's a letter of recommendation, you may need this. That's all he said. And I read it. It told what I did and what I could do. And I used it to get a job at FIA.

BETSY: Say what FIA was.

AUDREY: Factory Insurance Association. It was an insurance company.

BETSY: And that was on Woodland Street?

AUDREY: No, that was on 555 Asylum Street [in Hartford], going up the hill, just up from the railroad crossing, that building on Asylum.

BETSY: Did you take the train to get to work?

AUDREY: No, I had a car then. First I parked on Hopkins Street, next door to Hartford High School. Then when I got to be somebody, I had an indoor parking lot down in the basement.

BETSY: Sounds like the high life!

AUDREY: Yes, everybody was scrambling for parking spots down Hopkins Street and Garden Street, and I just drove down in the basement! [laughter]

BETSY: You could probably get good money for that today!

AUBREY: I enjoyed it and everything out there. That first week I was home, I thumbed my way back out there [to the CCC camp] and everybody was happy to see me! I came by a place out there, there was a small lunch room place between Goshen and the Mohawk State Park and it was like home. People would pick you up then [hitchhiking], but they won't pick you up now. I wouldn't. Well, it was hot so I sat in there and ordered a sandwich. The lady got that and a piece of pie for me. She asked me my name and what have you and put it in a book. She kept a registry book and someone has that book. Then of course the Rumsey Hall School was out there. Now, Schereschewsky [John Forby Schereschewsky] bought the Rumsey Hall School and moved it from Cornwall, Cornwall Bridge to Washington [Depot], CT. And that's where it is still today. It was a boy's school. Well, this is a strange thing about that. I was there and so was Julia, my wife, out there. Her sister worked for a doctor that was in the city. She had to have her tonsils out and the doctor did it. He had a friend who was the president of Hampton University, in the south. This was his summer place out there [in Cornwall]. That doctor said you are going to have to recuperate for a while, so he sent her out there to work for him out there as a domestic. Just until she could work again.

BETSY: Now you found this out after you dated her?

AUDREY: Yes, after. I didn't know she was there! But I had seen her at the Rumsey Hall School, because that president would bring kids up from Hampton to work for various people in the summertime. This was the summer place for wealthy people.

BETSY: Up in Litchfield.

AUDREY: That's where I met that singer. Not Marion Anderson, but I can't think of her name now. But she had the most melodious voice. On Sunday afternoons they would entertain. They had a choir and I would go over there to that school. I can't think of that lady's name. Everyone talks about Marion Anderson's voice, but this lady had a VOICE, even then! You could sit and listen to her all the time. I found out later that when she graduated from Hampton, she married a minister and of course that jazz life wasn't for

her, so she didn't sing anymore. She could out sing Marion Anderson any day of the week. [laughter]

BETSY: Now how did you meet up with Julia?

AUDREY: She was there. I came home and my brother [Herschel] and his wife, my sister [Maxine] and her husband, and Danny Douglas, a fellow friend of all of us, and Bill and Elizabeth Jones were having a little get together in Keney Park. Now, I'm single so they asked me to come on and be with us out there. We'll take a lunch. So I said, yeah. I went there, and there were a couple of other people. So we started playing softball, the boys against the women. Well, the girls got on base and if they got on base, they were tagged out. But every time Julia got on base, she could run like a deer. We had a hard time catching this girl!

BETSY and GORDON: [laughter] So, she caught your eye 'cuz she was quick!

AUDREY: Now this was ironic. When the day was over and we got back... When we got home that night I said to my brother, "I'm going to marry that girl." I just said that. But she had come there with Danny Douglas. But fall came and Danny went to Virginia University and he left her here.

BETSY: All's fair in love!

AUDREY: So, I made dates with Julia and we had a courtship for three years. It wasn't what you see today. It was a courtship! If she had to be in her house by half past nine, I had her here. She wanted to know where we went, what we did, and what have you. It was none of this flimsy stuff at all.

BETSY: Now she was living in Waterbury at this time?

AUDREY: She had moved here after she graduated high school. She lived with her sister who was married. Her sister Effie had a catering business. Effie's husband was the chauffeur for Alfred Fuller from Fuller Brush.

BETSY: Where did Effie and her husband live? And Julia?

AUDREY: The lived on Pliney Street in Hartford which is right in back of the cemetery. Later on she moved up on Rosemont Street which was right across from Fuller Brush.

BETSY: So for three years you courted Julia.

AUDREY: Yeah, we went places, we did a lot of movies, we went to dances that were at various clubs.

BETSY: Where were the clubs? Where were the dances?

AUDREY: One was the Labor Alliance right there on Trumbull Street. The other was the Julius Hartt School of Music over on Broad Street. The YWCA on High Street. All these dances were formal. We wore tuxes and long dresses. You were honored if you got an invitation to go!

BETSY: Did you have to buy a ticket?

AUDREY: Yes, you had to pay. We had one at the Comedy Club in Wallingford. We had to drive down there... pile up in the automobiles. I'll never forget the road going down there. Aljeesa and Albert James were in my car and Aljeesa needed to go to the bathroom. Now we were between Meriden and Wallingford. She said "Audrey stop, I gotta go to the bathroom." Well, where should I stop? She said "I'll go in the bushes." Well, there's a bend in the road on Route 5. So she got out of the car and went in the bushes and she threw up her gown. Well, a car came around the bend!

BETSY: Oh no! Well so much for privacy! [laughter]

AUDREY: And the car went toot – toot – toot! Well, she never got over that!

BETSY: Well, I think not! [laughter]

AUDREY: This wasn't canned music, we had live orchestras at all these places.

BETSY: I have to ask, I never thought about this before. Were these black clubs? Black social organizations or a mix?

AUDREY: Various clubs and fraternities would cater to these things. Most of them were on the upscale. You were honored if you got an invitation. I've got some of the invitations in a box there. Of course I have the dance programs. You ask the girls... You'll only find my name on some of the programs only once.

BETSY: Did you go to any social functions in Windsor or was it mostly Hartford?

AUDREY: Mostly Hartford. Windsor didn't have any social gatherings at all. I didn't even go to my Junior Prom in high school, but I was active in the prom. Me and Henry Billings, Tommy \_\_\_\_\_, Mary Kelly, Tim (Bosket?), we decorated that gymnasium. I had a lot of work there. Wind those streamers down from the ceiling and put the moon behind... the moon rising and a place for the faculty members with soft chairs. We even brought a blue living room rug that my mother let me take down. We made a place on both sides for the boys and girls. We had a punch bowl for the students and one for the faculty. They said that they never had such a class as active as this class. Henry Billings was quite an artist, but he couldn't make money doing that, so he opened up that shop on Bloomfield Avenue.

BETSY: Yes, the sign business. You didn't marry Julia until after World War II? Did you wait until you came home from having been enlisted to marry Julia?

AUDREY: I married in 1939, before the war. There's another story. Well, we got married on August the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1939 and we honeymooned in Ogunquit, Maine and Canada. We were in New Hampshire on our way into Maine to Ogunquit. I was in the arts and I like music and all that stuff. The Ogunquit Playhouse had *No Time for Sergeants* and I wanted to see that. But halfway in between there the radio in the car said that Hitler had come over into Czechoslovakia and was headed to Poland. I said to Julia, God, did we do the right thing? There's going to be war! And sure enough, there was war. Anyway, we stayed in Ogunquit and we saw the play and one day went swimming. I went swimming, Julia didn't go. That beautiful white sand beach. That sand was packed down so much that the kids could ride their bicycles. Well, I went in that water and that water was cold!

BETSY: Whoa! [laughter]

AUDREY: When I come out I got dressed and I tell everybody to go to the beach down here. That water NEVER warms up! Well, we got in the car and left Ethel Wood's place. She had a tea room on the side of the street. Effie knew her, Julia's sister, and she had this big house up there and we stayed with her. Then I said let's ride around Lake Winnepesaukee and see what there was to see. Nothing but the rich. You could see their yachts, small yachts parked underneath their garages on that lake and what have you. My God! We tried to find a place to stay but there was no place to stay, so I finally wound up in Montreal, Canada. They opened their arms up to us and we had a great time. I have the photos here and that was 1939.

BETSY: All part of your wedding trip?

AUDREY: Yes, all part of my wedding trip. We had a great time. There was a building and a restaurant and a dance floor. There were cabins in a horseshoe like with cabins all around. We got a cabin and we stayed there. Boy, they treated us fine and we had a great time. That was just above Magill University on St. Catherine Street, not too far from there. 25 years later, we went to Canada. We went to see where we had stayed. Well, the building was there, but the cabins were all gone. They had built motels around in the same place. I told the guy that 25 years before my wife and I had been on our honeymoon. He said, well let me see, I've got the register here. He got the book and I told him when it was and I said well, that's me, right here. He said, you're my guests. He let Julia and I stay there for three days, wouldn't let us buy any food, didn't charge us for anything at all. We were his guests. He told all his neighbors about these two people coming. He was filled every night. People coming because the dance floor was there and you could eat. Everybody danced. Julia was a good dancer, but I wasn't. The men would dance with Julia and I would just scuffle along with the girls. I could do the Foxtrot or something, but I never was crazy about dancing. We had a great time there. When we were ready to go, we told them when we were going to pack up and leave early. But I wasn't going to come back this way; I was going to come back on the New York side.

Over by Ethan Allen, on that side, and see what's over there and then drop by Albany. Well, when we got up that morning about six to leave about seven o'clock, there were lots of noises outside the door. There were 15-20 people out there from the night before who wanted to bid us goodbye because we had had such a good time. And I can still see those people waving to me and Julia when we drove off to come back home. That was 25 years after and that's what he said, he said you can be my guests.

BETSY: That's pretty good hospitality.

AUDREY: I've been to Montreal two or three times since that time. We went up there with Norfleet [Audrey and Julia's son] to Frontier Town and Santa Claus Land. Then I was there in 1967 again for the World's Fair. I looked at all the exhibits and the places from the various countries and all over the U.S. Most people wanted to go into the Russian exhibit and I did too to see Sputnik. But every time we looked the lines were loaded and it was hot. So I said I'm not going to stay in that line, and I got [in] every place but there and I never did see Sputnik.

BETSY: Did you see it fly overhead in the summer time? When Sputnik flew over?

AUDREY: No, but it was all over the paper. They had two or three abreast [in the lines] and the guy was only letting so many people in at a time. That day too Queen Elizabeth was there. Now I parked on the other side of the Saint Lawrence River in a great big parking lot that had just opened up there. Subways that crossed underneath the river. When we got here Queen Elizabeth's yacht with the sailors all in white was sitting there on the other bank. Nobody could get near the place. But to get back to the parking lot, this parking lot was so big. Four different parking lots. One was the Goose section, the Deer Section... animal sections. They had a piece of paper with a diagram to mark where you parked and you better take one of those papers and mark where you parked.

BETSY: [laughing] You would still be looking for your car!

AUDREY: Yes, because you would never find your car! Then we got the subway and went over there. It was so hot that day, so hot. There was a little brook about the size from here to the wall, with cold water running. There were people sitting on the bank with their feet in the water to cool off, because it was so hot! We just laughed. We went on a little farther and we passed by a glass building with the heat bouncing back on the sidewalk. You could cut it with a knife. Well, there were movies going on in a circle, several movies, so I said to Julia, let's go in there. You could sit down and see a movie and when it was done, go to the next one. So we stayed there and then we come out, it was still hot. As we walked out to the main part, we heard music. And you know I like music, good music. These kids today, they don't know good music. God, I said, Julia listen to that music. It's coming from over here. So we went to where it was a symphony orchestra of kids from all over Canada. The best musicians from various schools from all over Canada that they had put together and they were playing classical music. They were professionals. And they were only twelve to fifteen years old. So we sat there and

listened to that music and really enjoyed it. We had a good time. I was going to ask you, is Cathedral in the Pines in MA or Vermont?

GORDON: Vermont. [Rindge, New Hampshire]

AUDREY: We went there too, to the Cathedral in the Pines. To a service back there in the pine groves. The story was that that man, a minister whose son got killed in World War II, claimed that area and made that little chapel back there. He had a building out in the front that sold knick-knacks and a lot of religious stuff and what have you.

BETSY: When you came back to Windsor, did you live at your folks' house?

AUDREY: Well, before we married I built the three rooms upstairs.

BETSY: So you built the apartment over your folks' house before you got married. And that was ready for you when you came back.

AUDREY: And I bought everything in there wholesale.

BETSY: How long were you and Julia together in the apartment?

AUDREY: Many years.

BETSY: Then you built the house on this lot next door.

AUDREY: I built this house in 1950. We were there from 1939 until 1950.

BETSY: While you were there, you did enlist in the Army in the Second World War, is that true?

AUDREY: Yes, I was in the service.

BETSY: When did you enlist?

AUDREY: I didn't enlist, I was drafted. [laughter]

BETSY: You were *invited*! So when were you invited into the service?

AUDREY: I don't know what the date was, but it was 1943. I know that. It was warm weather.

BETSY: A lot of your classmates had enlisted?

AUDREY: You didn't have to enlist. The war was on! You got a letter to come.

BETSY: So a lot of classmates were drafted to come.

AUDREY: Everybody was drafted. The draft room was the first floor of 555 Asylum Street. Our offices were upstairs. Every day 200-300 people were getting off trains and buses, coming in there to be examined to get into the Army.

BETSY: Was Herschel, your brother, drafted too?

AUDREY: No, he was married and he had a small child. But I had no child.

BETSY: OK. And your dad was not drafted.

AUDREY: No, my father wasn't drafted at all. But pretty much anybody in World War II were draftees. The regular army before World War II... they did not have a million soldiers. They had half a million, five hundred thousand. When the war come on they had to get war-ready quick. When Pearl Harbor came, goodbye Charlie! You just waited until your number came up. My number didn't come up until 1943.

BETSY: Did you lose any classmates during in the war?

AUDREY: No, but Joe Mazel got shot up. I don't know if you know the Mazel family. He was the only classmate that got hurt. Let's see... He was the only one. He was in the infantry unit just about the time they were crossing the English Channel to Europe when he got shot. So he was back home again in a short time. Strange as it was, he and I were in the same room in 2004 with his troubles and my troubles.

BETSY: This was at Kimberly? [Kimberly Hall Nursing Home]

AUDREY: Yes. I didn't know he was there. But I knew he had been ill. He had recuperated from his war injuries.

BETSY: I understand that you lit up Kimberly Hall with all your stories.

AUDREY: We sure did! Joe and me and the guy that was the head of the Fire Department, John McGowan, he was the caretaker of the Elm Grove Cemetery too. The three of us there, we had a great time. I was transferred from the hospital up there. It was noontime and I was just come in. It was terrible to just go by the house and you can't stop when they brought me up there. I just put my clothes away in the bureau, and a fellow walks in the door. I recognized him to be Earle Donegan's son. So, I said Bill, is somebody here? He said, Pops [is] here. He had married Joe Mazel's daughter. He hollered, Pop, Audrey Lee's your roommate over here! So from that point on, for the month that I was there, we had quite a time. The girls were fighting over who was going to take care of Mr. Lee, who is going to take care of Mr. Mazel.

BETSY: How nice to have been fought over.

AUDREY: We had to go to the exercise room. You don't walk up there, they come with the wheelchair. She would take me and then take him. The nurse would announce when we go to the room, get ready boys and girls, here come the Three Musketeers! We kept them laughing all the time. What we said and what we did and what have you. When we left, Joe was the first one to go, on a Saturday. All those nurses on that floor where we were, they come and got him and wheeled him out to the front door where his son would pick him up. They were crying! They said that they hate to see us go. The same thing happened with McGowan, they cried! They said we enjoyed working for you guys. One of the nurses said she had never seen three people in one room get along so well as we did. She said that there was always somebody... if there is two or three people, there is always someone who is a rogue. You three people made our lives worth working for. When I went out, they did the same thing. A couple of them were wiping tears away from their eyes.

BETSY: This would have been in 2004? When you were recovering?

AUDREY: I was in the hospital up there for ten weeks. When I came home, boy did home look good. The song about there's no place like home? There *is* no place like home.

BETSY: When you came back home from the Second World War, think back to how Wilson changed, how Windsor changed after World War II. Describe some of that.

AUDREY: There was quite a necessity for homes. Arty Woods was building homes. He built about 400-500 homes here in Windsor and East Hartford and what have you over the years. I didn't like his homes. Clyde Carter, we were in Boy Scouts together, Carter of Maple Street, he had a little insurance agency. He was the salesman for Arty Woods' homes and he sold them insurance too!

BETSY: Well, that was convenient! [laughter]

AUDREY: And he made money! Then he built homes on Stoner Drive (Clyde did) and homes down in Newington. Same thing: sold them the house and got the commission and sold the insurance for the house. He made out all right. Well, to get back to the homes, everybody needed homes. Most homes were selling for no more than about \$8,000 or \$8,800, something like that. But I didn't like his little homes and I knew Clyde quite well and he said come on and I'll show you what Rocky Alexander is building. So he took me over to East Hartford and I saw the house. This was the house. Rocky wanted \$15,000-16,000 for the house. Every time Rocky went up in price, Clyde went down. Finally Rocky says last bid, I'm not going to go down lower than [to] \$10,000, so they settled for \$10,500. So that's what I built this house for: \$10,000.

BETSY: What changed along Windsor Avenue here? What businesses were different after World War II?

AUDREY: Windsor Avenue was pretty much the same. Everybody who was on Windsor Avenue was still there. Bloom's store was there; Pop's [Sid's] General Store was there; the Lefebvre's home was on the corner of Barber Street; those two tenement houses were here; Clement between Allen and Barber, they were there; Monoson [Jacob Monoson, upholsterer] was still here; and Hallgren Brothers florist was here right beside Monoson's.

BETSY: Right above where the fire house is?

AUDREY: No, right here, the little street right here. I forget the name of the street. Monoson, he was an upholsterer and he lived upstairs. He had a glassed-in showroom that shown a chair that he had done. You went to school here. \_\_\_\_\_ Brovera married one of Monoson's sons. She was a teacher in the school here. Did you have a teacher named Monoson?

BETSY: Was it Judy Monoson?

AUDREY: Could have been Judy Monoson. The old Monoson that I know, that was his son that married the teacher. She taught here, [in] Roger Wolcott [School] or one of the schools. Now sooner or later all over town was being built up and changed. Saint Gertrude's Church was right here in town where the parking lot is here.

BETSY: When was Saint Gertrude's first built down here? Was it in the [19]20s? Was it here when you moved from Hartford or did it come later?

AUDREY: The Wilson Congregational Church was over there where the library is now. The church got there somewhere in the late 20s or early 30s because we kids used to play baseball on the lot. There was nothing there. Then the Honor Roll of the veterans from World War II was there, too 'cuz the side of that church was all parking.

BETSY: World War II or I?

AUDREY: Two. Babe Murray built it there. All of our names from down here was on that. I was on that. Many times I wondered if anybody got a photo. I know everybody from here was on that Honor Roll. It was right where the parking lot is now.

BETSY: How about the Polish National Home. When was that built?

AUDREY: The Polish National Home was a three family building on the first floor next to Pop's General Store. That home was owned by people by the name of Meyers (Lawrence and Rose). There was just a little candy store in there belonging to them. Then next was those twin houses and then Bloom's [grocery] store. The Brookmans owned that store where the Polish National Home was at first. You know we talked about the Brookmans, as I said, an upscale store equivalent to Dillon & Wilhelm's store in the center. Then it got to be the Economy Grocery Store. The Economy Grocery Store was a

national chain like the A & P store. They were there and then eventually they became the First National Store. Then they had the A & P store where the JD Tavern is, that house on the side.

BETSY: That was the A & P? Wow! That's the corner of East Barber Street?

AUDREY: Yes, and then the First National Store was the store right there, right at the end of Corey Street. Then they left there and went down on Meadow Road. I wonder who is down there in that building because it was pretty good size, the building down there. There was nothing there but First National and a package store. The past owner was...

GORDON: Erwin Glanz?

AUDREY: Glanz, Erwin Glanz. The owner was Erwin Glanz. Wilson didn't change much. Have you ever seen that park over there?

BETSY: Sharshon Park

AUDREY: Well, Al Sharshon, me, Dave Howard, Frank (Cotcher?), we cleared all that brush, got it level. Joe Misky had all the equipment because he was building houses up there off of Matianuck Avenue and up to Park Avenue. He had his tractor and all that stuff and he come down and helped us clear all that stuff out. We built a baseball diamond there and the town put a chicken wire backstop for it. I presented them with plans for a little shed for playground equipment and a bathroom and a place for water. But the town didn't pay any attention to it at all.

BETSY: Now you helped out with Washington Park too, didn't you?

AUDREY: Yes. Well, Washington Park asked for volunteers.

BETSY: Was this before World War II or after?

AUDREY: Yes, before World War II. I spent three days in Washington Park, drained that swampy area out and cleaning out all that land with lots of other Windsor people. Solely from volunteers here. If you didn't have it, you had to do it yourself! It's a nice park now. There's a little pond there and all the people living around there skated on that pond down there and had a great time. I deplore the fact that so many people depend on the government. Well, the government can't run without money; so you get taxed and then they holler. The government can't do everything. You have to do something for yourself! It's getting to be that way. And I say there will be nothing from now on... it will be nothing like full employment from here on in, there will be nothing like full employment. There will always be a large number of people who cannot find jobs because there will be no jobs. Mechanization has taken away jobs. Not only here, that's all over the world. They have to find some way to take care of these people. You gonna say the government is doing it. Well, they just won't be. They'll get sick and tired of charging taxes and

making people pay taxes. You read today's paper. Hartford: Hartford's in debt and this joker wants to spend more money! Even Obama. We're in trouble financially and he wants a trillion dollars. Hartford misses the insurance companies and Hartford misses the industrial complex that was here before and supported Hartford. Hartford was a diamond in the rough, a diamond of the country. Money was here, it's not here anymore, and won't be here.

BETSY: How about when [Interstate] 91 came through?

AUDREY: 91 came through in... 1957. This house right here was in its path and was moved down here. There's another one – the Motyl house was moved on this street here.

BETSY: Houses were moved and some houses were taken.

AUDREY: Some of them was taken. Another one was moved from here over onto Warren Street. They got them for nothing, paying \$1,000 for a house. At first, no one wanted I-91, but they said we gotta have it. It was tough to have all the traffic from Bradley Field [airport] gotta come down Poquonock Avenue to get to Hartford. So I think it was Grasso [Gov. Ella Grasso] that thought of the rail car (People-Mover) to go directly from Bradley Field to Hartford. They tried it, but it didn't work out for some reason or other.

BETSY: So how did Windsor change when the highway was under construction and when the homes were all taken or moved?

AUDREY: Well, you do the next best thing no matter what happened. They would move the house or tear it down and pay you for it. So lots of people had to turn down the offer, they never got the full value for their home. Politics is politics. They do what they want to do when they want to do it. It didn't change very much, but it did make Windsor grow.

BETSY: You were involved in Windsor politics at this time? Democratic Town Committee politics?

AUDREY: I got involved in Windsor politics somewhere around... right after the war. What happened was -- we wanted sidewalks on Corey Street and that town manager wanted to put asphalt sidewalks here. No, I raised Cain at that meeting.

BETSY: When was this, about?

AUDREY: About 1952, I think.

BETSY: So no sidewalks until then.

AUDREY: I had seen black sidewalks in Waterbury where Julia came from and I said no, we want cement sidewalks like everybody else's down here. I raised so much Cain and

stated my case that so Lang said to somebody that guy belongs on the Town Committee. I go a letter from Lang that invited me to join the Town Committee, and I did. Of course they put me to work. The first thing I did was get on the committee for the [urban] renewal, the city was being renewed. They wanted to renew Poquonock and the Tunxis Avenue area where the old Dunham Mills were and the houses there along the Farmington River. When the mills closed, those were factory homes and they either gave those homes to the people who worked in the factories or [sold them] for very little money. There were no mortgages and most people don't want mortgages. Well, I only wanted \$40,000 for the planning grant for this project. We presented it to the governor to get the grant. Do you know that they sent the FBI to my place of employment and to neighbors around here to find out who I was? Those people were sworn not to tell me, even my employers! I didn't know till later that they had been here. I finally got the grant. I presented the case of what we wanted to do and allow those people to fix up those homes on Tunxis Street to look like new homes to borrow money at 2% interest. That was low! Somehow or other [they must have thought] I've got no mortgage on my home, I don't want to put a mortgage on my home now, so they got together and voted it down [and the factory housing was torn down]. On that riverside there now you got some beautiful homes. I haven't seen them, but from what I read, they call it River something now.

BETSY: River Street.

AUDREY: All I can say is that the Farmington River rises pretty damn high! [laughter] They better be careful down there. I've seen the Farmington River be right up to the bridge on Poquonock Avenue!

BETSY: Wow!

AUDREY: Halfway up the hill where the Carmons lived the water passed up there. Well, I got that project off. Then I was attached to the soil and erosion control authority. There's a brook that starts from... I don't know where from... [it comes] all the way down there, it crosses the highway by the shopping center.

BETSY: Decker Brook this is?

AUDREY: Decker Brook? It comes down in the back of this building here. The erosion was there. I drew up what I wanted to do there. You have to pack it, you know. You have cement there from Rood Avenue all the way down and across here. That went through. After that I wasn't assigned any committee work, but my two cents was heard here, there, and everywhere. Then I got to be Justice of the Peace for ten years.

BETSY: Did you perform some weddings?

AUDREY: Right here! I'll never forget one here. This girl and boy... Tudan from the Town Hall sent them down here. He could marry them up at the Town Hall, but he sent them down to me.

BETSY: This would be George Tudan, the Town Clerk

AUDREY: This boy and girl and the mother come from Ohio and they were here. That mother was mad, I could tell by her expression. I got my stuff and stood them here and performed the ceremony. But that woman, she wasn't happy at all. She wanted a big wedding for her daughter and here she was being married by a Justice of the Peace in this small town. So I finally signed the marriage certificate and what have you. They left here and I found out from my cousins in Ohio where they came from that that mother had a full wedding for them back there. [laughter]

BETSY: It wasn't any more legal, though.

AUDREY: That lady was mad – you could tell all over her face. The other one that I missed was that boxer from New Jersey, the heavyweight champion.

BETSY: Floyd Patterson?

AUDREY: Floyd Patterson! He got his license here too. George [Tudan] sent him down here. His manager wanted to know who I was and he said no, no, no, no. He was married a year before it came out, and he didn't want the public to know. He recognized me, so I missed that. Frank Potter married them.

BETSY: He did! Frank was a classmate of yours?

AUDREY: No, he came from Indiana. Frank was on the Board of Directors in the office where I worked and that's how I got along. Every time he had a Directors meeting, he would always come by my desk and ask how are they treating you Audrey?

BETSY: Frank and his wife lived on Wilton Road?

AUDREY: Yes, that's right. After he retired, Frank called me several times. "What are you doing Audrey?" Nothing. Well, put a jacket on and we would go out to lunch. I didn't know where he was going to take me to lunch, so I threw a tie in my pocket and put a jacket on. So, where did we go? Hartford Club. We did that five or six times. All those waiters, I knew them, some were friends of mine, were thinking who the heck was this guy, who does he know? [laughter] But that's what he did until he got sick. Poor guy. He died early after he retired. He got a tumor on his brain and his son (who was a doctor) couldn't do anything for him. They took him to New York and he finally died. They were very good people. I attempted to call that girl who was very close to them – one of the Thralls. One of the Thralls... well, it don't come to me now. Every time Frank went down to the shore when he was alive, he would dig clams and he would come back with a

big bag of clams for me. Of course, Julia could eat clams from now to tomorrow. [laughter] Well, all and all, I can tell you what I know, [show you] my photos and what I got here. I had a good life. Better than I ever expected. I was very fortunate to do the things that I did. Now I had a brother that was just the opposite. The only time he left Hartford... He had a little business, but I would ask him, "come on now Herschel let's take the excursion train to New York City." They ran an excursion train every Sunday to New York City for \$2.00, round trip!

BETSY: Those were the days!

AUDREY: So we would go down there. New York had three teams: the Dodgers, the Giants, and the Yankees. So we would go down to see baseball games. That's the only time he got out. He was never active like I was. You saw the same people on that train every Sunday. Well, we didn't go every Sunday, but the people liked that excursion train. Later on they put in a bar car, you know how that went. Of course they sold food on the train and there was a group that played checkers. They left that [checker] board on that train, that was their board. We had a good time.

BETSY: What teams did you and Herschel root for?

AUDREY: They always made sure that one team was in town. If the Yankees were in town, the Dodgers and Giants would be on the road.

BETSY: What was your team?

AUDREY: The Yankees were my team, but we went to the Brooklyn Dodgers. We would see what team was in New York when the others were on the road. It was something to go there. When I think about it: if the transportation people would put an excursion train on, yes they could charge a low price, [but] it would be taking money out of Connecticut and giving it to New York.

BETSY: Well, there is that.

AUDREY: But at the same time, you spent the money at the ball games, you ate at Horn & Hardart's and Nedick's and what have you. You know, Horn & Hardart's where you put the money in and you could see what you're going to get. We had a good time. But my brother, he never left Hartford. He married Hartford and stayed there! [laughter]

BETSY: Well, Audrey, we were lucky you chose to stay in Windsor. It is a richer community because you did.

AUDREY: Well, I am lucky because after what I went through when we moved here. I didn't like it one bit. I'll tell you, when we found out that we were not going to go back to that beautiful school that we had there, we just had to make do. I learned to love Windsor. Then for a time I only went to Hartford to work or go to the movies or shop at [G.]Fox's

[Department Store] or (Whysmith's?) or Steiger's or the haberdasheries for clothes or something like that. That's all. But I learned to love Windsor. Windsor, to me, here and in town, was full of hard-working, good Christian people. Most of them had just emigrated from Europe from 1900 to 1920. Lot of them still were\_\_\_\_\_, they had families here, and they were good, hard-working people. I found that out. I began to love Windsor, that's why I stayed here.

BETSY: Well, thanks for telling us all about it. We really appreciate your sharing your stories for this oral history.

AUDREY: Did you get all of it?

BETSY: Well, we will find out!

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