



WINDSOR
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Betty and Lenard Hellerman: Share Your Windsor Story

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L.P Wilson Community Center, Windsor, CT

Interviewer: Michelle Tom

Interviewee(s): Betty and Lenard Hellerman

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Michelle Tom

Wait first, can you say your name? Both of you?

Betty Hellerman

Yeah, I'm Betty Hellerman, and this is my husband Leonard, and he was a dentist in town. And his first office was up above the Windsor Federal Savings, and he had a beautiful view of the old, old town hall. And then across the street was the Green.

Lenard Hellerman

The Windsor House.

Betty Hellerman

The Windsor House was there.

Lenard Hellerman

John Luddy's house.

Betty Hellerman

Yep.

Lenard Hellerman

John Luddy was a patient of mine and I'd like to tell the story about him.

Betty Hellerman

OK, you go ahead and do it. [laughs]

Michelle Tom

Please, go ahead. I would love to hear it.

Lenard Hellerman

For the lack of more elaborate stories, I'll just tell a little short one about John Luddy. He was a patient of mine, and he was in the office one day and he wanted some advice. He said that somebody wrote to him and said they're putting out a directory of millionaires. And in order to be in this directory of millionaires, it would cost them \$200. [00:01:00] [laughs] Frankly, I just – that's the whole story, because I don't know, I don't even remember exactly what I recommended to him. I know he could afford it and he was quite a dapper gentleman. What a really nice guy. Anyway, I thought that was pretty funny that he wanted to know should he invest \$200 to be in this directory of millionaires. [laughs] At that time, a million was a lot of money. It's still a lot. [laughs] So, Betty, what would you like to say?

Betty Hellerman

Well, I would like to say that we came in 1954 towards the end of 19 – no, it wasn't 1954. I'm correcting myself. 1956. And it was towards the end of '56 and I must have been about 22? 21, 22, and I knew zero about the world. And so [00:02:00] one day, I think it was in about 1957 or '58, a gentleman called me and he said, "I'm looking for someone to be chairman of the Community Chest Drive." That's what it was called in those days. "And would you be interested?" Well, being naive, I didn't know what it was all about. But I said yes, and I did it, and I can't believe to this day that I actually did it. I had a lot of good luck with getting good people and he broke it down for me. You had to have a chairman and then someone under the chairman and then local people making phone calls. And I found this lovely lady named Mrs. Okhan who lived in Wilson, and she helped me out a great deal. And then I got my neighbors all to help me.

Michelle Tom

What did you do as part of the Chest Drive?

Betty Hellerman

Oh, we had to make phone calls and then we had a list of people. We had to go to every house in the community [00:03:00] and all the way out right around here and I thought Rainbow was the end of the world and Palisado was even more the end of the world because we lived in Windsor Center on Preston Street at that time. And that's one of my stories. I love the town of Windsor. I am a big cheerleader for it and I'm on the Library Advisory Board and the library – what's the other one? Oh, gee.

Michelle Tom

Yeah, we wanted to hear about the library book brigade.

Betty Hellerman

Oh yes, the library bookkeeper brigade. Well, it was when the library was enlarged, and it was someone's genius idea to do this. So the books were stored in a house across the street and we formed a brigade. And it was right across Broad Street and we just kept moving the books along from hand to hand to hand [00:04:00] to the new library. It was a wonderful experience. If I remember clearly, it was not a particularly pretty day. I don't know if the sun was shining or not, but it was not a real sunny day. Let's put it that way. But it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. Lots of comradery. Oh, and I have another story. OK, one day I got a call from a gentleman named Steve McKay, who I didn't know. And he said to me, "How about being the volunteer chairman for SummerWind?" And I had heard that SummerWind was coming. It was an outdoor Performing Arts Center and it was going to be out on Blue Hills Avenue extended.

Betty Hellerman

We had some land donated and that's how I met so many wonderful, wonderful people. I got over 100 volunteers, all by calling on the phone and telling them if they would volunteer, they could sit down when the [00:05:00] concert began and see the concert, the performance or whatever it was. And then I handed that list down to the Windsor Women's Club and so forth. And that's how I met Florence [Barlow] and I met oh so many other wonderful people in the town. We have a great, great town. We really do.

Lenard Hellerman

And I was the, I guess you'd say, official photographer for SummerWind and I took a ton of wonderful pictures. I have photographs that no one's ever even seen of all kinds of performers. Who do I have pictures of? Oh, just an unbelievable number of famous people.

Michelle Tom

Do you remember when you started working at SummerWinds?

Betty Hellerman

SummerWinds, let's see. You know, I can't really remember, but I know when the roof collapsed, it was a big snowstorm. And the tent, not the roof, but the tent collapsed. And then it did come back, and it came back for maybe two years after that. And then it just, you know, [00:06:00] didn't make it so that was a big disappointment. But it was a beautiful, beautiful venue and great performers. Oh, Lou Rawls, you have a picture of.

Lenard Hellerman

I've got so many people.

Betty Hellerman

Brubeck. Dave Brubeck. Judy Collins.

Lenard Hellerman

Dave Brubeck. Wonderful photographs for these fellows and I have one photograph of all the volunteers of –

Betty Hellerman

Of SummerWind?

Lenard Hellerman

– you know, posing for my photograph. A sort of formal photograph of about – God, there must have been 35 of them at least. And I do feel bad that I have not been able to give photographs to some of those people. If they hear this video and would like me to make them a photograph, I'll try to do it for them, but I don't know. If you want any further stories, we can keep. [00:07:00]

Michelle Tom

Well, it's on tape now, so you're –

Lenard Hellerman

Do you want me to keep going?

Jenny Hawran

If you've got more.

Michelle Tom

Yeah, if you talk about more.

Betty Hellerman

Oh yeah, when you're here this long, you have more.

Lenard Hellerman

I'll tell you about what excites me to think about Windsor. When I was in dental school at what was called the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, now called the University of Maryland Dental School, outside the Deans office, there was a bust, a figure, a statue more or less, with just the bust part. And it was Horace Hayden. "Who the heck is Horace Hayden?" Well, it turned out that I ended up practicing my dental profession in the town that Horace Hayden was born in. He and what's his name. OK, he and the other – [00:08:00] he was the president, the first President. Every time I think about the fact that our Hartford Dental Society used to actually own the property he was born on, out on Hayden Station Road, right off of Palisado. Right adjacent to the railroad track. I'm not sure if we still own it, if they still own it or not. Possibly we do, but they have not known what really to do with it, so they probably didn't want to keep it.

Michelle Tom

That's where the Horace Hayden Monument was and then they moved it in the front of our Chaffee House.

Betty Hellerman

Well, it was on a tri piece of land, yeah. Right in front of the little shops.

Jenny Hawran

Continue, I'm sorry. You're good.

Michelle Tom

Because I read the monument. I thought it said that. And I think his brother or nephew – was it Anson Hayden you were trying to think of? Anyway, other Hayden's were dentists very early.

Betty Hellerman

Oh, that's interesting. We didn't know that.

Lenard Hellerman

So, [00:09:00] I guess I can elaborate even further. The monument now to Horace Hayden, who started the first dental school in the whole world, the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. The monument to his memory is now near the Windsor Historical Society. But before that, most people these days probably don't realize where it stood and what it looked like before that. Well, well right now of course it's by the Windsor Historical [Society]. Before that, it was on the triangle by Hayden Station Road. But before that, it was three houses up? Three houses up from a house on Stony Hill.

Betty Hellerman

It was a globe.

Lenard Hellerman

It was. [00:10:00] Well, we were building our house on Stony Hill. I was technically the builder. I didn't know a thing about building, but I had help. Carpentry with supervision they call it. But technically, I hired the subcontracts and all that. So one day I went to the town hall to look up something about the property, the map of the property, and I noticed that 3 doors up from our house that was going to be built was some land owned by the Hartford Dental Society. Now what in the world would the Hartford Dental Society want land in Windsor at all for? And I just couldn't wait to find out and I found out pretty fast. It turned out that there was a reverend that lived in that house, and he, his son was a dentist, [00:11:00] and they needed a place in Windsor to put a monument to Horace Hayden. So he gave him a piece of land that must have been 20 feet by 20 feet. Just a little tiny piece of land right on Windsor Avenue, right on the street practically.

Lenard Hellerman

And so the Hartford Dental Society built a monument that was of bricks. It was about 15 feet tall, I think. It had a lighted globe on the top. And on the front of it was the bronze plaque that is now on the rock that's at the Windsor Society. What happened is that the monuments started to deteriorate. And so they just had to destroy it and take it down. And it ended up that Hayden Station Road and they put it on a rock. But that was really strange as could be, when I realized why the Hartford Ellis Society [00:12:00] owned a piece of land right 3 doors up from where I was building a house. It was really strange.

Michelle Tom

That's so funny.

Betty Hellerman

So, I think that will do it for now.

Michelle Tom

Yeah, yeah. Thank you guys so much.

Betty Hellerman

We can go.

Michelle Tom

We really appreciate you sitting down with us.