

**Growing up in Windsor:
an interview with Elizabeth Bryant Parker**

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INTERVIEWEE:	Elizabeth Bryant Parker (1925 - 2019)
INTERVIEWER:	Julia Baldini
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BALDINI: All right. This is Julia Baldini interviewing Elizabeth Parker on Friday, January 15, [2010] at around 9:15 a.m. Libby, would you mind introducing yourself?

PARKER: I'm Elizabeth Hawley Bryant Parker. Hawley was my mother's maiden name. Bryant was my father's name. Parker is, I'm Mrs. Frank Parker.

BALDINI: Can you tell me a little bit about where you were born and maybe a little bit about how your parents came into Windsor?

PARKER: I was born in Windsor at Hartford Hospital but in Windsor, and apparently they [her parents] lived in the little house at the foot of Stony Hill. Then I moved to 160 Broad Street. My mother came from Brookfield, Connecticut. Her name was Ruth Fairchild Hawley, and my father came, I guess from Hartford, but lived in Windsor from a very early age on Broad Street in a house that was, I guess, part of... you have a picture of it at the Historical Society with a bunting in front. It's where the Plaza Building and the hardware and all that is now [Windsor Ace Hardware, 296 Broad Street].

BALDINI: Oh, OK.

PARKER: It was owned by Bissell and Bryant and there was another family.

BALDINI: What year did your mother come to Windsor?

PARKER: I have no idea. She was, she graduated from Mount Holyoke [College], and I think she said she taught in East Hartford and then moved to Windsor and roomed in the big Hayden house [275 Broad Street] I guess, on the green, on Windsor Green.

BALDINI: So she came here to be a teacher?

PARKER: No, I think she was a teacher but I don't think she taught here. I think when she came here then she worked at Aetna [Insurance Company] and I guess that's where she met my father. But she's originally from Brookfield, Connecticut. Her father was a minister.

BALDINI: And your father...

PARKER: My father came from Hartford apparently as a very young boy with his brother and I say they lived on Broad Street.

BALDINI: Just again to clarify: what were your mother and father's full names?

PARKER: My mother was Ruth Fairchild Hawley and my father was Hilliard Bryant. He didn't have a middle name.

BALDINI: Can you remember what Windsor was like when you... what's your earliest memories of Windsor when you were a little girl?

PARKER: Well, probably when... I vaguely remember 160 Broad Street, but as I say I was only two or three years old, and we moved from there to 50 Elm Street which is just across the street now when I was about six or seven. And Windsor, of course, was a small town of probably 6,000 or 7,000 [people]. It's now 29,000.

BALDINI: Do you remember what kinds of people were living in Windsor when you were a little girl?

PARKER: Well, probably the majority Anglo Saxon although there were Afro-Americans. My father was in insurance and real estate.

BALDINI: And he owned his own business?

PARKER: Yes.

BALDINI: Can you talk a little bit about that?

PARKER: Well, my mother tells the story that when I was a year old, my father came home from Aetna and said, "I've quit my job (in the middle of the Depression), and I'm going into the insurance business on my own." And he evidently was successful at it. And I think just before World War II, I think he went into real estate also.

BALDINI: So he owned his own business in town? Do you remember where that office was?

PARKER: Well, it was at 50 Elm Street and when he died in 1953, my husband and I came back from Stamford [Connecticut] and my husband took it over. It's now Parker Ellingwood [The Parker Ellingwood Agency, Inc.]. All the time he had it, it was at 50 Elm Street, at home.

BALDINI: Can you tell us a little bit about your grandparents? What you remember from them, and their names, and maybe what they did?

PARKER: My mother's mother was Julia Alice Hawley. She was a Terrell from Brookfield, and I think Obtuse [Hill] abuts it. She was a homemaker. Very religious, but very progressive. Grandma Hawley, and I adored her. And my mother's father was Rev. Franklin Hawley. A farmer, owned half of Brookfield [Connecticut]. Of course Brookfield was only about 2,000 people then. He was the Rev. Franklin Hawley.

BALDINI: What did he farm?

PARKER: I guess everything. I remember I was very young then. He was killed when they were putting the corn in the big silo for the winter. He was feeding a bull and the bull caught him with his horns. Back in those days there was no penicillin, there was nothing, and so he was killed. They farmed everything, I guess, cows and chickens. I went over there every summer for years, and there were chickens.

BALDINI: Did you go and help out during the summer or...?

PARKER: Well, I had three cousins there that I was very, very close to. Because my mother's brother and his wife and their three kids lived in the house, too. They had a big, big... They were property rich but money poor. They had a big, beautiful home which burned down twice, but the third house is still there now.

BALDINI: Are your cousins living in it or have they sold it out of the family?

PARKER: No, of course they're grown up and married, and the oldest one has died.

BALDINI: So it's out of the family now?

PARKER: It's all out of the family now. It's on top of Whisconier Hill, Route 25.

BALDINI: Can you tell us about your father's parents?

PARKER: I can't tell you very much. My father's father was Clarence Bryant. I guess they worked at Aetna. My father's mother was Harriet Bliss, and her father was Elisha Bliss [Jr.] and was head of the American Publishing Company and brought Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain to Hartford and published most of his first editions. So he was very much connected with the... His mother was a Bliss, and her father, as I say, was Elisha Bliss, Jr.

BALDINI: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

PARKER: No. I was an only child.

BALDINI: What kind of activities did you do with your family growing up? What do you remember?

PARKER: Well, my father did not enjoy good health; and he also had a mental illness which I was not aware of. I didn't have any family here in Windsor, but there was a lot of friends within the confines of Windsor center so I ...

BALDINI: Who were some of those friends that you remember?

PARKER: Well, Mary Clark Giffin. Then the family right next door: the Greens [48 Elm Street]. There was three people there. Marian Green, who turned out to be my sister-in-law years later, she's still alive. Her two brothers and they all palled around with the three Parker boys.

BALDINI: What schools did you go to?

PARKER: I went to Roger Ludlow, which is now Saint Gabriel's [Parochial School]. Well, to begin with before that, I must have gone to Marguerite Mills' nursery school on Maple Avenue [Bloomfield Avenue]. Then I went to Roger Ludlow, which is now Saint Gabriel's, and H. Sidney Hayden for middle school, which has since been torn down, and then to John Fitch [High School] and graduated in the class of 1943 from John Fitch. Then I went to Colby Junior College, now Colby Sawyer Junior College [New London, NH].

BALDINI: Do you remember any of the teachers that you had?

PARKER: Yes. There was a Miss Madigan who later was Mrs. Alconis, and she lived at the end of Elm Street.

BALDINI: Do you remember what year that was?

PARKER: That was junior high.

BALDINI: Do you remember any of the other teachers you had?

PARKER: There was the Brown twins of which you have the pictures of, and one taught kindergarten at Roger Ludlow and one taught fifth grade [Miss Adeline Brown]. There was Miss Madigan in junior high. High school: there was Mary Wilson and there was John Rimosukas and there was Sam Crockett. Very fond of Sam Crockett even if he did almost flunk me in algebra [laughter]. I still can't do math. Miss [Inez] Searle.

BALDINI: So what was your favorite subject?

PARKER: Probably Social... well I don't know if they called it Social Studies in those days. My mother, to go back to my mother, had been a Latin teacher.

BALDINI: Oh, OK.

PARKER: She told me once she taught Latin for eleven years, but the one person she could not get Latin through their thick skull is her own daughter.

BALDINI: Did you have to take a language?

PARKER: I took Latin and French.

BALDINI: But you just did...

PARKER: I just never could get it through my head. I just couldn't get Latin through my head! [laughter]

BALDINI: I want to get back to your experiences at school. What kind of classes were you taking?

PARKER: Well, of course, in Roger Ludlow there was, I suppose, English and... There was one course, I guess you'd call it Homemaking now. We were making, I can remember doing cross stitching a tablecloth. Arithmetic. Spelling. Penmanship with Miss [Inez] Searle.

BALDINI: I actually just realized that we didn't go over what year you were born and what your birth date is.

PARKER: October 3, 1925. 10:38.8

BALDINI: October 3, 1925. That gives us a nice reference to the years that you were going to school. What was school like for you back then? Did you enjoy it? Did you...?

PARKER: I enjoyed elementary school, but I was miserable through seventh and eighth.

BALDINI: How come?

PARKER: Well, it was junior high and there was a teacher there I didn't like, and...

BALDINI: Do you want to say her name? [laughter]

PARKER: I don't remember her name now. I was kind of miserable in middle school and then got to John Fitch and had a good time through high school. A lot of those friends that I had in, well, all through school but in John Fitch and so forth, I've stayed in contact with through the years.

BALDINI: What do you remember most about high school? What did you like most? 11:41.7

PARKER: Well, at noon we had dancing to a record player and Mr. Hoyt, Principal [William] Hoyt, used to come up and tell us we were dancing too close. [laughter]

BALDINI: Was this a class or were you just doing this during your...

PARKER: No. This was the lunch hour.

BALDINI: OK. What kind of music were you listening to? Who were your favorites?

PARKER: Well, way back then was Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey and... oh, golly. A whole load of them. That was that Glenn Miller era.

BALDINI: So what kind of dances were you doing?

PARKER: We were doing the Fox trot and that was the beginning of jitterbug or we were getting into jitterbugging.

BALDINI: And this was during your lunch, your lunch time?

PARKER: Right. Lunch time. Our whole social life then, you've got to remember that was, you were leading up to World War II. Social life was high school. Then a whole bunch of us of all religions belonged to the Epworth League, [a] part of the Methodist Church. Then on to the Cozy Corner which is now the Whistle Stop Shop [Whistle Stop Café, 190 Broad St. in 2010].

BALDINI: Right. Can you tell us more about the Cozy Corner? I understand there was a room in the back that...

PARKER: Well, to the side, there was a room on the side which we didn't use. The only time we used that was when we had two going-away parties for guys that were going into the service. It was very, very well supervised by Mr. and Mrs. Nagle.

BALDINI: Mr. and Mrs. Nagle owned the Cozy Corner?

PARKER: Owned the building, the Nagle Building.

BALDINI: Now, there was a drug store in that building at one time?

13:31.6

PARKER: I think that was Prouty's Drug Store which then moved over here on the corner of Elm Street. But, the Cozy Corner – you [Windsor Historical Society] have pictures of "the gang." That was at the Cozy Corner.

BALDINI: So, you remember having two kinds of celebrations or dances back then?

PARKER: No. One of the typical things was we had the Junior Prom at John Fitch. Then in our gowns and tuxes walked up to the (because nobody had any cars), walked up to the Cozy Corner. And that was where our social life was. A lot of our social life. And then the Methodist Church, which was then on the confluence of Poquonock and Bloomfield Avenues. I dated a guy from the Catholic Church, but pretty near all of the churches, the young people... we had dances there every other Saturday night which some people are shocked at. But my mother played the music. Other parents were chaperones. And Bradley Field opened up and a lot of the fellows came down from Bradley Field. There were two or three marriages.

BALDINI: Do you remember what the room looked like? If it was decorated at all?

PARKER: No. It was the downstairs of the Methodist Church and it was very plain. And the stage was only about two feet above the dance floor so my mother had an overview of who was with whom. So I would compare notes with her the next day, who danced with who [laughter]. But anyway. But it was very closely supervised. Very closely supervised.

BALDINI: Now, this was happening in the Methodist Church or was it in the Cozy Corner?

PARKER: Methodist Church, but we went from there, probably walked up to the Cozy Corner. Now, we had a jukebox. There was a jukebox. A pin ball machine. The room next door was empty but I don't remember... I remember just one going-away party for a guy who was going into the service.

BALDINI: Tell me about your proms in high school. Do you remember where they were held? 15:49.3

PARKER: In the auditorium [of the high school].

BALDINI: They were held in the auditorium? Did you have a theme back then for your prom? They have a lot of themes now.

PARKER: Oh God, I don't know. I don't remember. I don't remember. I guess so. I can remember it being decorating for one prom, but I don't remember what the theme was.

BALDINI: Did you make your dress or did you buy it?

PARKER: We must have bought it. I don't think my mother made it. We must have bought it. I don't even remember who I... I went with George Green, I guess. George Green and _____. I don't know. There were dances then. We used to have a lot of... But they were on the stage. John Fitch auditorium. That's where most of the dances were. All of the dances were.

BALDINI: What else can you tell us about from your school experience? I mean, funny stories or anything you remember from back then? 17:00.8

PARKER: Well, I lived on Elm Street, across the street from where I am now. I'd walk up to Preston Street and I'd meet Mary Clark, and I'd meet Betty Arthur and Mary Clark, as you know. And then we'd walk the rest of Preston Street. And in those days, the end of Maple Avenue was a great, big lot. Cross that and then go on to John Fitch. I have some cute pictures. We used to have what they'd call Baby Day, and you went and dressed like a baby.

BALDINI: Really? They kind of like have Pajama Day now at the schools so...

PARKER: Yeah, well, this is a Baby Day and in our yearbook was all kinds of pictures of various kids sitting around John Fitch.

17:56.3

BALDINI: Did you do a lot of dating in high school?

PARKER: Yes, I did.

BALDINI: Do you remember, like, your first boyfriend?

PARKER: I don't think I had a definite boyfriend. Yeah, I don't know. [laughter] Yeah, I did a lot of dating. There was quite a, well; I don't want to call it a gang. Most of my social life was the people who lived around here in the center, and we all had dates and so forth.

BALDINI: So, you lived in what we call Windsor Center, one of the villages. Did you have friends in some of the other villages or was it just...?

PARKER: Yes, I had some friends in Poquonock. See we all got to be friends when we all ended up at John Fitch High School. That's when Poquonock and Hayden Station and Wilson and everything all came into John Fitch. And then, of course, they all got mixed up together then. Before that, it was mostly Windsor Center went to Roger Ludlow. Windsor Center went to H. Sidney Hayden. But then when we got to high school and then they all came in from all the other sections.

BALDINI: Did it cause any conflicts when all the villages ___?

PARKER: I don't remember there being any. As I say, Wilson came in by bus and then they would come indoors there and say, "We're here! We're here!" So we always knew when the Wilson kids arrived. But we had a lot of friends and I had some friends in Poquonock. A couple of them I still have contact with.

19:20.3

BALDINI: So besides going to a lot of dances, what other things did teenagers do?

PARKER: Well, I was very active along with a whole bunch of others in the Epworth League at the Methodist Church. Now, World War II, we sent out a photograph ___ [newsletter], which are now collectors' items, and you have them in the Historical Society. There were little pictures of the servicemen or couples that Reverend [Donald] Dorchester [took] and then several of us got together one night a week and sent them out to the servicemen. We went roller skating in the Skating Palace down off Windsor Avenue.

BALDINI: So that building's no longer there?

20:44.9

PARKER: Don't think so. And see back in those days, Hartford was a vibrant city. There

were lots of big theaters and department stores; and it was a beautiful city. An awful lot of what you did, you got on a bus and you went to Hartford if you were old enough. (I never had a car until after I was married.) You went into Hartford to things.

BALDINI: Do you remember the places that you went to or certain shows you went to in Hartford?

PARKER: You mean the movies?

BALDINI: Yeah.

PARKER: There was the Palace Theater. I don't remember the names of movies. I do know, and I was laughing about it the other day: show me a movie of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers anytime. Well, there was a theater in Windsor, the Tunxis Theater. 21:36.6

BALDINI: Where was that?

PARKER: That was down on Union Street. It's where Selig's antique shop is [Central Street Antiques, 25 Central St.]. Then they built the Plaza Building [280-294 Broad St.] when I was in my early teens. And then that was the Plaza Theater.

BALDINI: Was that really exciting for the town when that was built?

PARKER: Oh yes! Everybody went to the Plaza Theater. It closed along with a lot of other small theaters.

BALDINI: I actually remember, some of my relatives grew up in Windsor, and I remember when I was little, around twelve or thirteen [years old], the Plaza was still open, and we used to go to the movie theater then.

PARKER: Oh yes, went to the Plaza Theater.

BALDINI: So you went roller skating, to the movies. You went to a lot of dances.

PARKER: Well, yeah. A lot of dances.

BALDINI: Did you get in any trouble? Were you guys kind of a good group of friends or did you cause some mischief?

PARKER: We were pretty good. I guess there was some of the guys got into some mischief at one time.

BALDINI: One time?

PARKER: The guy I was dating at the time had a car.

BALDINI: What kind of car was it?

PARKER: I don't remember. He's still alive. He's in Bloomfield. Anyway, he picked up a whole bunch of the other guys and during an intermission at a dance at John Fitch [High School], they all got in the car and they drove all over, went across the town green, I guess. When they came back, they said, "Well, I guess we're in trouble." So I came home and got up enough courage to tell my father who knew my date's father very well. Called [him] up and said, "I think the kids got into a little trouble last night." The girls weren't in any trouble, but the guys were. Well, anyway, I don't know what happened, and we've laughed about it since. Two of the fellows were in the Navy and they were home on leave. So anyway, they got into some mischief. I guess some of the guys got in some mischief. I don't remember getting into too much mischief, but I did a lot of dating.

BALDINI: Was it different then, dating, than today?

24:01.5

PARKER: I guess so. Today they have three dates and they move in with them. We didn't do that in those days! We were very well supervised by parents.

BALDINI: So you were free to just date a lot of people?

PARKER: Yeah, I dated. I dated a fellow from Windsor Locks and I was dating a guy more on and off, a guy from White Plains, New York. His sister and brother-in-law lived here in Windsor.

BALDINI: Oh, so he would visit them.

PARKER: Visit them and I met him. But you've got to remember that in 1941-42, World War II started, so all social life changed. Everything changed. Every guy you met or had been dating went off to the service. I was not dating Frank then. I knew him, but I wasn't paying any attention to him and he wasn't paying any attention to me.

BALDINI: Let's talk about the house that you grew up in.

PARKER: It was a bungalow. It's still across the street. Brown-shingled bungalow.

BALDINI: What the address of this house?

PARKER: The house I'm in now is 77 Elm Street. That's 50 Elm Street.

BALDINI: 50 Elm Street's the house you grew up in.

PARKER: Yep, across the street.

BALDINI: Did your family have a garden?

PARKER: My mother was a gardener.

BALDINI: What kind of things did she grow?

PARKER: Oh, she grew roses. She grew zinnias, petunias. Gosh, my mother was quite a gardener.

BALDINI: Can you describe your home? How many rooms it had? 25:37.9

PARKER: There were six rooms. Well, there was a living room, a dining room, a big kitchen. Well, I'm saying three bedrooms: two of the bedrooms had a closet, and the third bedroom didn't. That's what I don't like about bungalows. They don't have any closets. That's why in this house, there's so many closets. A big attic, big cellar, and bungalows have a big, front porch.

BALDINI: OK. That's nice.

PARKER: There's a lot of bungalows in Windsor. A neighbor of mine told me they called them "Sears Roebuck houses."

BALDINI: Was it like an all-season porch or was it completely open?

PARKER: No, no. It was strictly summer.

BALDINI: And it had heat and lighting?

PARKER: Oh yeah.

BALDINI: Do you know what year the house was built?

PARKER: It's got to have been built sometime before 1925 because when we moved in there, my father rented it. It had some connection with the Greens next door. They built it and some cousin of hers had it, and my father rented it from them. And then I think just before World War II, my father bought it for, if I remember correctly, something like \$4,000.

BALDINI: Wow! That's a deal today. [laughter]

PARKER: And I remember him sitting in there. They had to take... had to put coal through a chute into the cellar.

BALDINI: Oh, OK.

PARKER: And then he put [in] a General Electric oil burner, which I believe is still there.

BALDINI: In the neighborhood... what kind of ethnicities were in this neighborhood?

PARKER: Well, when we moved into 50 Elm Street, there was an Afro-American family across the street, which were very nice.

BALDINI: Do you remember their names or what they did for a living?

PARKER: I don't remember their name. There were three doctors. My father was in insurance and then there was Dr. [William H.] MacCready, Dr. [Clyde A.] Clark, Dr. [John M.] Monacella. Dr. [Raymond E.] Zeiner was a dentist. I don't know. I do know there was one Afro-American family.

BALDINI: You said your mother liked to garden. Did she grow any vegetables?

PARKER: I think so. She belonged to the Garden Club. Very, very active in the Garden Club with Jane Nearing and Mrs. [Florence] Ellsworth, all those ladies. And [she was in] the Women's Club at First Church in Windsor.

28:24.6

BALDINI: Did your family have any chickens or any small livestock?

PARKER: No, no, no. We had cats! Boy, did we have cats!

BALDINI: How many cats did you have?

PARKER: Well, you see, we had two female cats. And there was no veterinarian in those days, so we had lots of kittens. And we had a wicker tea wagon. I can remember taking four or five kittens and taking them for a ride down to the center.

BALDINI: So, did you give the kittens away to friends?

PARKER: Yes. Force them on friends!

BALDINI: I think they still do that today.

PARKER: Force them on friends. Frank and I had a lot of cats, too; but they were all altered and so forth.

BALDINI: Do you remember kind of how specifically different Windsor Center was from the other neighborhoods? When you visited your friends in other villages, was there a different atmosphere? Different jobs? What was going on?

PARKER: Well, it's one of my favorite topics because Windsor, when I was growing up, and I have quite a bit written here, was a very, very vibrant center. There was three drug stores. There was several grocery stores. Two of the best were Dillon's Market [188 Broad St.] and Sisitzky's Market [292 Broad St.], which was in the

Plaza Building. There was an A&P [Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., 178 Broad St.], a First National [Store, 296 Broad St.], Smith and Burk [138 Poquonock Ave.]. There was a...

BALDINI: First National Bank?

PARKER: No, First National Grocery Store. The banks were Windsor Federal and Windsor Trust, which was right down at the end of the street. Mechanics [Bank]. It was a very, very vibrant Windsor. Like so many of the towns, and then these big shopping centers sucked them right out.

BALDINI: Did people do a lot of walking around the center?

PARKER: Oh, yes. Well, you know back in those days, I walked from here to the Cozy Corner. I walked from here to the Methodist Church. I walked from here [to] anywhere. I wouldn't do it now.

BALDINI: So it was just more accepted to do more walking?

PARKER: Yes.

BALDINI: Wasn't as dangerous?

PARKER: No. And there were bus stops. I could take a bus at the end of the street. Buses ran every half hour.

30:49.3

BALDINI: Do you remember how much the bus cost?

PARKER: Well, I think something like 25 cents because I worked in Steiger's [Albert Steiger, Inc.], in the summers in Hartford. But there was three drug stores. Well, for a short time there was two theaters and then there was one theater. There was three drug stores. There was a men's shop, a men's clothing store.

BALDINI: Do you remember the name of it?

PARKER: No, I don't. But there also much later, there was Viv [Vivian] Webster's dress shop [V Marie Shop, 176 Broad St.] that I worked in. Well, that was much later. But they just... the Enfield Mall opened up and just sucked it [shopping in Windsor Center] right out.

BALDINI: These stores were all open during the Great Depression. I know when we had talked earlier, you had mentioned that you didn't really feel, you didn't really recognize that there was a Great Depression going on.

PARKER: No, I was young, for one thing. Number one, I was young. And my father was in

the insurance business, and evidently people did buy insurance. And he, evidently, was very philanthropic because I can remember him helping out a lot of... I didn't realize this was going on, let me put it that way. But I do remember that he was helping out a lot of other people. We were never rich people. Lived in this little bungalow _____. Some of the people he was helping out had bigger homes. And I can remember men coming to the back door and my mother giving them a plate of food, a suit of clothes.

31:49.9

BALDINI: Were they homeless or were they just people...

PARKER: I think they were people out of work. They were men out of work. The family that got hit very hard by the Depression was my mother's mother and brother and sister-in-law because they owned a lovely home in Brookfield and a big, big farm, and they got hit. They had a lot of property but they weren't good on the money, and they got hit pretty hard. That's one reason why I went over there and spent a month in the summer because my father had evidently paid for it. They got hit hard in the Depression.

BALDINI: Do you remember any kind of WPA [Works Progress Administration] projects that were going on in town?

PARKER: Yes. Washington Park.

BALDINI: OK. Can you talk a little bit about that?

PARKER: Washington Park is right up the street. Beautiful park now. The big problem they are having there now is the algae keeps growing so they have to keep scooping that up. But there's a picture of me, which I can never find, of my mother and I. I was probably was six or seven [years old] and I was up there swimming.

BALDINI: So that park was built with WPA funds?

PARKER: I think so. And that must have been in about in the 1930s.

BALDINI: Do you remember any other WPA projects going on?

PARKER: There was a CCC camp [Civilian Conservation Corps] in Windsor Locks. My father took me up there to visit that camp.

BALDINI: Do you remember exactly where in Windsor Locks?

34:11.9

PARKER: I can't think of the road.

BALDINI: That's OK.

PARKER: I think the road now is across from the museum, [New England] Air Museum.

D_____ was a CCC camp.

BALDINI: Now, you said that you worked at Steiger's in Hartford during the summer. Do you remember what years those were?

PARKER: Well, it was between [19]'43 and... It was the summer of '43 because I had just graduated from high school and I was going to Colby [Sawyer] Junior [College]. I was there the summer of the [Hartford] circus fire. I was in Steiger's upstairs when the ambulances and everything were going by. I worked there that summer and the summer between '44 and '45.

BALDINI: Do you remember what your job was?

PARKER: Yeah, I was a sales clerk; and I also worked up in the office doing something. I don't remember what I was doing.

BALDINI: How much money did you make an hour?

PARKER: Oh, heavens! I don't remember. I don't remember. The big thing in those days was to get on the bus and go to Hartford and go to G. Fox [& Co., department store], the Connecticut Room, and Sage Allen's [department store.]

BALDINI: What's the Connecticut Room? I haven't heard of it.

35:27.4

PARKER: That was a big, beautiful restaurant in G. Fox. Very, very nice. Dr. Virginia Hale has just written a book about Mrs. [Beatrice Fox] Auerbach of G. Fox. But Steiger's was a very, very nice store.

BALDINI: So you graduated from high school in '43.

PARKER: Right.

BALDINI: Did you have any kind of big celebration or...?

PARKER: Nope. They almost [all] left from there to [go to] the war. I think my mother had a small party afterward at my house. And there was about one hundred [students] in our class. This last year of [20] '09, we lost eight members.

BALDINI: Do you keep in contact with some of the classmates that are still around?

PARKER: I kept in contact with pretty near all eight of those people. I've just kept contact with two of them to let them know about those others that are gone.

BALDINI: So, let's talk a little bit about the war. You remember a lot of the men just kind of graduated from high school, they...

PARKER: ...went right into the war.

BALDINI: What was the feeling in town?

PARKER: Very... no, I'm going to say very cohesive, the people. My father was very active in the Chamber of Commerce, and he set up (and I believe you have a picture of it) the Honor Roll board on the front lawn green of the old town hall. And as the guys went in, he got Henry Billings to put the names in. And, unfortunately, when one of them was killed, then they put a star next to it. And there are pictures of that Honor Roll board [at the Windsor Historical Society]. And I sold War Bonds, and then we had air-raid sirens. My father was an air-raid warden for Elm Street. He had look out for planes. Ok, one of the items in something that has come up recently... There was Bradley Field, which had all kinds of the B-24s, the fighter planes. And they would dog fight, practice dog fighting, over the top of the towns. And why a little bungalow that was down there between two bigger homes, but they would come over Windsor and then they would do dog fighting and zoom down. I got so I knew the names of some of them: B-16, a twin tail. Anyway, but they dog fought. And there was noise. Yes, there was noise.

BALDINI: Was it scary at all?

PARKER: Kind of, yes. But, and also the sad part of it, was that you'd meet some of the servicemen coming through [Bradley Field] and then they would be leaving on a B-24 to go to Europe, and the next day you'd see the planes going over. But recently I heard of somebody that was not [from] around here but was complaining that the planes overhead are making too much noise. They should have been around Windsor in World War II. I was over visiting my cousin in Brookfield, and I said they owned a lot of land. He had to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and I got up with him, when we were spotting airplanes and then you'd phone in if you saw ____ airplanes. And we had prisoners of war in Bradley Field. German prisoners of war.

BALDINI: Really?

PARKER: Yep. And the Methodist Church was very active in Christian outreaching. A group of us went up with Reverend Dorchester to visit them.

BALDINI: Really? Do you remember...

PARKER: I don't remember much about it, but I remember we went up there.

BALDINI: Did you bring food or ...

PARKER: Probably brought... I ____ bring food, but I think we went up and visited them or something. I remember there was German prisoners of war up there.

BALDINI: Do you remember how many?

PARKER: No, I don't.

BALDINI: Just German?

PARKER: I think so. I think so. But a lot of people in Windsor had the soldiers in for Sunday dinner, and we really... A lot of outreach. And, of course, every family in Windsor... Now next door I mentioned the Greens: both Arthur and Norman were in the service. Why we called Norman "Uncle Tubb," I don't know, but we always called him "Uncle Tubb." He was in New Guinea, and he came home. A lot of the men... this didn't happen to Frank, but a lot of the men went overseas, and then they came back, and they would be sent out again a second time. This happened to Tubb. He was in New Guinea, and he came home, and then he went back over to Germany. So ... I was dating a guy, writing to a fellow who was on Saipan. It was a very, very... At least we knew who our enemy was, which we don't now. And then Korea, another thing there, the fellows that were in World War II, when they came home... Now this almost happened to Frank: they were home a couple of years and there was the Korean War and some of them got called back in. And then, of course, the Vietnam War: by the time we got to [the] Vietnam War, we had a son whose number was on its way, but they cut it [the draft] off.

40:10.6

BALDINI: So what was that?

PARKER: The Vietnam War was horrible.

BALDINI: How was that feeling though, knowing that your son's number was coming up?

PARKER: I was scared to death! I had a first cousin in the Korean War, and I met... Dr. MacCready's son, then Dr. [William H.] MacCready's son was in Korea. I knew people in Korea, but as I said, if Frank had been in World War II, he was not called back for Korea. But I had a cousin in Korea.

BALDINI: So, you and Frank. Tell me about when you and Frank met because you had mentioned something that you went to New York or...?

PARKER: Well, no. Frank was the youngest of three sons. There were two and one-half years between them. Marian Green next door married Frank's oldest brother. Frank's father died very young, and Mr. [Mason C.] Green was very much an outreach father, so [all] of the three Parker boys were in and out of the house next door with those three kids. In and out, in and out; and I was the only child next door, and I was in and out, in and out. So I always kind of knew him, but I... So, he and I just kind of knew each other. And his two brothers [Fred and Bill Parker] dated one girl, Marian [whom Fred married. Bill married Ginny Putnam]. Frank dated a load of girls. And so, I kind of knew him; but he went to Springfield

43:07.5

College and then he went into the service. And to put it in capsule form: I wasn't the girl he thought he was coming back to, and he wasn't the guy I thought I was waiting for! [laughter]

BALDINI: What year was Frank born?

PARKER: 1919. He was six years older than I was.

BALDINI: What did he go to Springfield College for?

PARKER: He came out of there in 1941 and he was a Boy Scout field executive for a couple of years. Then he went into the service. And then when he came back, he went back to being a Boy Scout field executive. But what happened to him, and I worked in B. Altman & Company, I saw it happen there and it's happening now: the companies had to save the jobs. So when a veteran came home, they went [back] in at the same level that they left but in the meantime [they had been] in World War II. One of his very good friends had a heart murmur and so had stayed behind. And the big thing with the Boy Scouts, and I imagine this is true in the Y.M.C.A. too, to have your own council. So when Frank came back, he still was almost entry level, and of course he'd been through a war. I saw this happen at B. Altman & Company. A fellow came back and he'd sold neckties when he left and he'd been a fighter pilot and couldn't come back and do that again! So anyway, so he [Frank] got very restless and unhappy and said to my sister-in-law, "You know, I'm going to go to New York with a boyfriend of mine. Is there somebody I know there?" And she said, "Lizzy Bryant's there." So he phoned; no, he wrote and asked me for a date, and I said, "Yeah. OK." [He asked] "Have you got a friend?" and I had a roommate. He came down in October, and shall we say, we looked at each other with an entirely different set of eyes.

BALDINI: This is October of what year?

PARKER: [19] '46.

BALDINI: So what were you doing in New York?

44:54.0

PARKER: I'd graduated from Colby [Sawyer] Junior [College], which was an all girls college.

BALDINI: Where is that?

PARKER: In... where is Colby? I'm having a "senior moment." Turn that off! Anyway, [I] got out of there, and they had [career] counseling up there, and I loved retail. So B. Altman & Company had a course they called Junior Executive Training Course. In other words, you went in representative of various colleges, and you went in and worked in one department for two weeks and another department for two weeks and then I ended up in personnel.

BALDINI: What did you get your degree in at Colby [Sawyer] Junior College?

PARKER: Associate, Associates of Arts [degree]. That ___ nothing [laughter]. No, what it amounted to was my mother wanted me to, I think, get away from home and out on my own and...

BALDINI: What was college like for you? You lived there, obviously?

PARKER: Oh yes. It was five hours away [New London, NH]. I was homesick a little bit to begin with, but it was the best thing I ever did because I really never ... And I went to New York for two years, and as I say Frank came down, and I came home in April and we were engaged and married in August.

BALDINI: So, what year was this?

PARKER: '47. We were married August 16, 1947. There wasn't much getting to know each other because his mother and my mother were the best of friends, and I knew his two brothers, and his sister-in-law I grew up with, and we'd all done all our dating so, you know. He'd dated, I said years and years later, we were having a reminiscent talk, and I said, "You know, we didn't start off on an even playing field because I knew every girl that you dated. You didn't know any of the guys I dated. You didn't know any of the guys I dated, and I knew all the girls you dated [laughter]. So anyway.

BALDINI: Did you get married in Windsor?

PARKER: First Church. Yep.

BALDINI: What was that like?

PARKER: Well, you know Jean [Ellsworth] and Alex Northrup, Mary [Ellsworth] Ransom's sister, were married in June, I think. Mary and Ford Ransom were married in July, and Frank and I were married in August all in the same church.

BALDINI: Do you remember how many people you invited to your wedding?

PARKER: About 150.

BALDINI: Wow! That's a lot. Did you have like your bridesmaids and...

PARKER: Mary... I had a maid of honor with Mary Clark [Giffin]. Frank's dearest college friend was his best man. My cousin John [Hawley] in Brookfield that I dearly loved was an usher. Next-door neighbor of Frank's, Doug Carlson, was an usher. And I wore my Great Aunt Maida's wedding gown which you have up at the Historical Society, and I have a picture of it.

BALDINI: Wow. Yeah, I think we have your wedding photo in Frank's folder.

PARKER: Because my father went into Hartford to tell Aunt Maida I was engaged. She said, "Would she like to have my wedding gown?" And when my father came home and told me, I said, "What's Aunt Maida... she never got married. How does she have a wedding gown?" [He said] "Who do you think Mrs. Edward Bryant was?" I said, "I don't know." Well, it was Aunt Maida. So he brought it home, and I said, "Oh, I don't know." My mother went crazy when she saw it, and the three neighbors saw it. "Oh, Libby! You've got to wear that!" So, Mrs. [Florence] Ellsworth said, "I have a dressmaker in West Hartford that can..." So she did. She re-did it and it was lovely.

BALDINI: Wow! That's really neat.

PARKER: Give you a little side joke: When Elaine Olson was doing the display in the [Windsor Historical Society's] North Gallery of wedding gowns, and that was there, and when we were fixing it up, she was stuffing the... and I said, "You putting more stuffing in here than there was when I wore it!" Anyway, however, so anyway. Then we went to _____. Frank had been a Boy Scout field executive, but he went out to Ohio to his aunt's funeral. And his uncle, who was the vice president or something of Eaton Manufacturing Company, said, "If you ever want to leave that job in the Boy Scouts, I will offer you a job at Eaton." So it happened that he left the job with the Boy Scouts and worked in sales at Eaton Manufacturing. And we moved immediately to Wilton [CT] and then lived in Stamford [CT] and then my father died in [19]'53 and that's how come we came back here.

BALDINI: What did they manufacture at Eaton?

PARKER: Lock washers. Lock washers. And he traveled from Monday through Thursdays. Then he commuted to New York on Fridays.

BALDINI: Wow! What kind of car did Frank have?

PARKER: Plymouth.

BALDINI: What color?

PARKER: First one was dark green. When he and his brother Bill (his brother Fred didn't go in the service because he worked for Pratt & Whitney and he was deferred because he was working on engines). They both bought brand-new cars. Bought cars. It was dark green, I think. And when he worked for Eaton, he did a lot of traveling; so about every two years, he bought a new car. I'm on my eleventh year with this car [laughter]. I'm not following in his footsteps.

BALDINI: So you had said that you didn't even get a car until after you were married.

PARKER: No. I didn't really have a car of my own until after, until we moved back up here then I got my own car.

BALDINI: What was your first car?

PARKER: God, I don't know. Probably... we did business with Windsor Garage, Bill Simpkin; and he sold Plymouths.

BALDINI: Where was Windsor Garage?

PARKER: First it was in Windsor center [15 Central Street], then it was on Palisado Avenue. It was where the apartments [Delamere Woods, 625 Palisado Ave.] are there.

BALDINI: On the left-hand side. Did you not get your driver's license until...

PARKER: I got it when I was 21 [years old]. No, I must have gotten it earlier than that because when I was 21, I wasn't living here. My father taught me to drive. I was thinking about... That question's in here, and I was thinking of who taught me to drive. I guess my father must have taught me to drive.

BALDINI: Did you have mostly automatic cars or were they manual transmission?

PARKER: Oh, no! They were shifting [manual transmission]. So when automatic came in... and why anybody wants a shifting... Anybody who had a shifting car doesn't want to go back to that.

BALDINI: Was it difficult?

PARKER: Well, yeah. On a hill! You're trying to work the accelerator and the clutch. No way would I go back to that!

BALDINI: Did a lot of people in town have cars when you were growing up or were people mostly doing a lot of walking or taking public transportation?

PARKER: You know, I don't really know. My father always had a car. I think they did a lot of walking and I think they did a lot of public transportation.

BALDINI: Did you have a bicycle?

PARKER: Yes, I did.

BALDINI: Did you ever bike into Hartford or if you had to go down, would you take the bus?

PARKER: No, we took the bus. Well, as a matter of fact, [if] you want to go way back: I went into Hartford and took the trolley car.

BALDINI: Well, talk about the trolleys because I know...

PARKER: Going up Stony Hill.

BALDINI: The last one, I think, was April, around 1940, 1941, so you took it. You were around for a while with the trolleys. What do you remember about the trolleys?

PARKER: Remember trying to get up Stony Hill. Seems to me as though I remember coming back from Hartford with my mother and it was icy; and the trolley car slid down Stony Hill. No, they were... Then, of course, the trolley car in those days went on up to Poquonock but there hasn't been transportation up there in years. And it used to go on up Palisado Avenue, on up to Springfield [Massachusetts]. And his mother... And then there was buses... Now, his [Frank's] father worked for Aetna [Insurance Company, in Hartford] and they used to take the bus down. When we moved back to Windsor in [19] '53, there was no transportation up there, and he would find his mother walking from 546 Palisado Avenue, walking down into Windsor and taking the bus and going to Hartford. We were living with my mother; and we wanted to get away from that situation although she was lovely but, you know, a young family... So we talked her into building next to us. There was a big barn here which was part of the Filley farm.

BALDINI: Yeah, talk a little bit about the Filley farm.

54:37.4

PARKER: Well, I found that this was the Filley farm [Broad St. and Elm St. area] when I've been doing work with the historical society. There was a big, big barn here. There was a big open lot here before World War II. This was all a big open lot. I think Joe McCarthy. I'm not sure about that, developed four houses on either side but left a big, big barn here.

BALDINI: So right up close to the road?

PARKER: Yeah. And Irving Clarke said, "If I buy that lot (which could be two lots) and that barn..." because he was in real estate, and he was looking for a house for us to buy. And his [Frank's] mother was very, very shy. She said, "I'm not moving into the center on a street unless it's [near] somebody I know." So we came cruising down Elm Street, and then, of course, there's a brook [Creamery Brook]. (I have a picture I want to show you.) A brook, and Frank said, "Irving Clarke has offered to buy that lot and the brook and that barn and build. We could build two houses." Well, here was her oldest son who lived two doors up. My mother lived across the street. We'd be here. The Greens, which is her oldest son's in-laws, lived across the street [48 Elm St.]. So what could you have more than that? But I don't think she ever settled in because she came [from], you know, that's a lovely home up there.

BALDINI: What's the address of that?

PARKER: 546 [Palisado Ave.]. Jean Norris lives there now. So anyway, she didn't move down here. [Frank's mother did move next door to 73 Elm Street].

BALDINI: So you guys built this house together?

PARKER: Yep. Irving Clarke, Joe McCarthy built these houses. When I was growing up, when we moved on to Elm Street, there was a brick house down at the corner. And Joe Filley, that's where my father always said, that's where Joe Filley always lived. Then he must have died and then it was... I think, Cliff Roberts (who originally came from Palisado Avenue) had a tourist business there and then it was a bar.

BALDINI: What happened to the [Filley farm] barn that was here?

57:02.8

PARKER: We tore it down and built these two houses.

BALDINI: Did you use any of the wood from the barn or did you just...

PARKER: No. We weren't astute enough at that time. If I knew then what I know now I'd probably have reconstructed the barn [laughter].

BALDINI: You'd have a gorgeous house, right?

PARKER: But, you know, it had a brick foundation; and to this day, it's been since [19]'57, to this day if you went out and dug in my backyard, you'd find bricks. You would find bricks. Bricks, bricks, rocks. All kinds of things. And we didn't own the brook then, but the Romanoskus' who were on the other side, which was in those days was this wide and this deep and now it's like this, bought the brook. But we own 180 feet back. Seventy feet front and 180 feet back. And my husband was a gardener. About this barn: we tore the barn down. And as I said, I own 180 feet back; but my husband was a gardener.

BALDINI: Do you remember what kind of barn it was? Did they use it for storage? Did they...

PARKER: I imagine originally it was a barn on a farm, but they used it for storage. [see *Images of America: Windsor* book, page 19.]

BALDINI: So, this house was built in 1953.

PARKER: [19]'57.

BALDINI: '57. OK. So you came back in '53 and lived with your mother across the street.

And then how long did it take them to build this house?

PARKER: We moved in in March. I think they started in the fall. They whipped right along. And Grandma Parker [Mary Porter Parker] was so traumatized by the upcoming move that she and her sister, her sister's husband, went on a trip down south. The three sons and their wives moved her so [that] when she came back, the curtains were up. You know, the house was all settled. No, I had a very nice mother-in-law but very... I don't think she was... My mother was 72 [years old] when she died. Grandma was two years younger. I don't think she thought she was going to be here too terribly long, and she ended up moving here in [19]'57 and died in [19]'82. She had a cottage down (which my mother found for her), down in Lord's Point towards Stonington [Connecticut], and she loved it down there. It was a little bit of a dump of a cottage but she loved it.

BALDINI: What were the roads like in town? I know that they had trolley lines. Did they dig up the trolley lines right after...

PARKER: You know the trolley lines, I understand, through Windsor Center weren't dug up too terribly long ago.

BALDINI: I remember seeing a newspaper article I think from the late [19] '90s where they were... Were all the roads paved in town or were there still a lot of dirt roads?

PARKER: As far as I know. Well, of course, Poquonock and all those were all, that was all country [rural] when I was growing up. Poquonock was all tobacco and country. Wilson certainly had paved roads. Although the road from here to Hartford must have gone down through Deerfield. My father was very upset about such a terrible road going from here to Hartford and had something to do with them building a paved road to Hartford. But I don't know if that's Deerfield Road or Windsor Avenue.

BALDINI: So you had Washington Park around here.

PARKER: Ice skating! Ice skating there in the winter. Boy, did we have ice skating! And Michael's Jewelry Store from Hartford piped in music. And there also was Loomis Pond [for] ice skating.

BALDINI: Could you do ice skating at night or was it...?

PARKER: Oh, yes. Ice skating at night.

BALDINI: So it was like winter dances, almost.

PARKER: Yes. It was all lit up and piped-in music, and I could walk up there because it isn't that far up the street. No, ice skating was wonderful.

1:01:55.2

BALDINI: What other parks were there in town that you visited?

PARKER: Well, back in those days it was my father's idea of a Sunday afternoon drive to go to Keeney Park.

BALDINI: Well, tell me about the church that you went to.

PARKER: Well, we started off Episcopalian. My father's family was all big-shot Episcopalians. My mother was a Congregationalist from Brookfield [Connecticut]. But, anyway, she went to Episcopal Church, all went to Episcopal Church; then apparently my father got into an argument with the Episcopal minister. So anyway, when I must have been about sixth grade or so, my father marched himself out of the Episcopal Church.

BALDINI: Which church was this?

PARKER: Right down here.

BALDINI: What was the name of it?

PARKER: The Episcopal Church [Grace Episcopal Church of Windsor].

BALDINI: What was the address?

PARKER: Whatever...

BALDINI: We're trying to get a location for...

PARKER: [311] Broad Street. Broad Street. I don't know the address. Anyway, at that time I was getting restless, and so I hiked myself to the Methodist Church, which was over here. A lot of the friends I was going with were going... Well, I went to the Congregational Church [First Church In Windsor] Young People's for a couple of meetings but they weren't overly friendly, I didn't think. But I ended up in the Methodist Church [Trinity United Methodist Church].

BALDINI: And that was also on Broad Street?

PARKER: Congregational Church is up across from where you are [Windsor Historical Society]. It was at the confluence of Poquonock [Avenue] and Bloomfield [Avenue] come together, where the 75 Restaurant is]. That's where the Methodist Church was and the parsonage was behind it. And so my mother and father were kind of (reluctant?), and my grandmother Hawley, who was very religious, finally said, and I wanted to join the church, and my mother and father were kind of nahhh [reluctant]. My grandmother piped up and said, "Look, she's going to church, what difference does it make which church she's going to?" My grandmother went to Florida for the winter so when she came back, she'd stay

with us. She'd stay about a month or so. She said, "If you won't go to church with her, I will." Well anyway, I went to the Methodist Church, I was in the choir, I sent out a newsletter with two or three other friends, went to the dances. And my whole social life was the Methodist Church and the Cozy Corner and John Fitch [High School]. And then my father joined the Methodist Church.

BALDINI: What other type of community events did you go to? Were there parades and the Shad Derby?

PARKER: Long before Shad Derby, there was a big Memorial Day. Well now, you see, during World War II, there wasn't much Memorial Day. The guys didn't like marching. But we had, well all right, now I'm going after Frank and I were married, no, before. There was Memorial Day parades. They were big. I used to go around with my father to the graves and put flowers on because all of his family and now part of mine are in Palisado Cemetery. Frank's in Veterans Cemetery [East Street]. There was parades!

BALDINI: Today, I know, we use the Green a lot for events, concerts and ...

PARKER: Yeah, I don't think it was used... Well, there's a picture of my father playing the drums ____ the Episcopal Church in the youth band group. There's a picture of my father on the Windsor Green. There were a lot of trees on the Windsor [Green] and the 1938 hurricane flattened them. There was a lot of trees.

BALDINI: Did you ever attend summer camp?

PARKER: No.

BALDINI: And you just went and visited relatives in Brookfield [Connecticut] for the summer. Did your family ever travel on vacation?

PARKER: We went to Madison. Madison, Connecticut. Went down there or we went over to Brookfield to visit my mother's family. My father was not in either physical or mental good health but very active, I will say that. He was very active.

BALDINI: Did you ever work on the tobacco fields?

PARKER: No, I didn't. In those days all the guys in Windsor, all the teenaged guys in Windsor, worked in tobacco but the girls didn't. Then my mother made the comment that... when my daughter got old enough and worked in tobacco, my mother said, "I didn't think I'd live long enough to see this daughter or granddaughter of mine working in tobacco." Then the girls later did, but I never did. But the guys all did. All the teenaged boys did. Well, not all of them, but a lot of the teenaged boys did.

BALDINI: Do you remember the migrant workers that came up [from the south]?

PARKER: The Jamaicans were very nice. I love their accent. And the Afro-Americans came up. Of course, the thing was they didn't all go back. Yeah, I do. I remember them very well.

BALDINI: What do you think the most significant change in Windsor Center, in your neighborhood, has been over the years?

PARKER: The loss of businesses. Loss of the independent businesses. And, of course, it's also that Windsor is growing towards the north, the northwest. The 1979 tornado, well, wiped Poquonock out but Poquonock is the place to live now. It was farms then, but now there's some beautiful developments, beautiful homes. Stony Hill when I was growing up was a nice place to live.

BALDINI: Stony Hill in referencing the...

PARKER: Well, Arthur Brooks built a lot of those homes, and they are all very nice homes. Wilton Road and Hillcrest Road. Of course there was no Nook Farms [Road], and the high school wasn't there.

BALDINI: Do you remember what year Sage Park closed, the race track?

PARKER: No. I remember it was there as a kid, but I don't remember.

BALDINI: Did you ever go to it ever?

PARKER: I don't think so. If I did, I don't remember.

BALDINI: Blocked it out, maybe [laughter]. So I know that your family or at least your husband's was very involved in politics. Was your father involved in politics a lot? What did he do in town? 1:08:44.3

PARKER: He was in insurance and real estate. He also was on the Board of Education. And I think he must have been on the Republican Town Committee. And my father was very active in the [Windsor] Chamber of Commerce.

BALDINI: Did he found the Chamber of Commerce or...

PARKER: Well, the Chamber of Commerce disbanded for a while. And I can remember, but I can't tell you the year, I can remember that some man came to see my father at 50 Elm Street and said, "Would you be interested in helping to re-start the Chamber of Commerce?" We've just been over this and I tried to talk to Margaret Loucks about it. So I think he must have been one of the ones that re-activated it. I can't tell you what year. The Chamber of Commerce has been going into this. I can't tell you what year, and all I can think of is Stan Loucks and Bill Simpkin

and Bill King and my father must have been a part of it. He never was chairman of it, but he was active in it.

BALDINI: And how did your husband get involved in politics?

PARKER: Well, we moved back to Windsor in [19]'53, and a lot of things my father had been involved in, Frank picked it right up. And then Frank got into the Chamber of Commerce, and he took to that like a duck to water. He was in everything in the Chamber of Commerce. There's this Frank Parker Beautification Memorial Award that's out there now for businesses that improve their looks and so forth, and they give that out once a year. Frank was in politics. When we were in Wilton [Connecticut] and when we were in Stamford [Connecticut], we volunteered to, I don't know, work for some candidate. I can't even think who it was. So, he was always interested.

BALDINI: Were you ever really interested in politics?

PARKER: Yeah, I loved it. Even as a kid I was up against the radio listening to... yeah, I always have been. I always have been.

BALDINI: Do you remember any specific campaigns that you worked on or...?

PARKER: Well, after we came back, we worked for... and I was just reading a letter from Tom Meskill. No, Frank got on the town committee before I did, but I worked in registering voters and all that kind of thing. And then I went on the [Republican] Town Committee also and we worked for a lot of the candidates. I think one of the first ones... There's a letter there thanking me for sending out Christmas cards for Tom Meskill. And Frank, we ran headquarters back in those days, we'd have a headquarters a couple of months before the election, and I was chairman of soliciting food. Boy, did we have food!

BALDINI: Do you remember where these headquarters were?

PARKER: Well, we had a headquarters at the Barnes' house which is now up on the Moorlands [5 Moorlands]. Dorothy and Warren Ball live there. We had a headquarters in the old Campbell School. We had a headquarters in one of those places, one of those rooms. We had a headquarters in the Plaza Building. We had a lot of headquarters around. And Frank was on the Town Council, two terms. And he ran for the Board of Education but didn't make it, but at that particular time I was having my first heart surgery so he said he would have resigned.

BALDINI: Do you remember anybody in town that you really looked up to?

PARKER: Yeah, I saw that question here, and I'm trying to think.

BALDINI: That's OK. We can come back to it.

PARKER: Not really, in particular.

BALDINI: Well, let's talk about post World War II. So in this neighborhood and some of the side streets were built in post World War II?

PARKER: No. This is post World War II, but these side streets are all old streets.

BALDINI: Right. But ones going down, maybe some of the side streets off of Elm Street: were those around here?

PARKER: Yes, pre World War II they were all around here. Post World War II, I think Pilgrim Village was one of the first. I think Pilgrim Village was one of the first developments. Parkview Drive up off Bloomfield Avenue, up behind Washington Park: those homes are all post World War II.

BALDINI: Do you remember a lot of the servicemen coming back and building and starting families in town?

PARKER: Oh yeah. A lot of...

BALDINI: Can you talk about the effect Interstate 91 had on the town?

PARKER: Tremendous.

BALDINI: What happened?

PARKER: Well, of course, a lot more traffic, and it was only two lanes.

BALDINI: Two lanes on each side?

PARKER: Yes, two lanes on each side. It made getting from here to Enfield much easier, of course.

BALDINI: What were you going to Enfield for?

PARKER: Well, Enfield Mall. That kind of thing. It made going into Hartford, of course, a lot easier.

BALDINI: Do you remember there being any controversies about certain areas of town being dug up or buildings being demolished because of the highway going in?

PARKER: I'm thinking much later. I'm thinking [Route] 261 [actually Route 218] in Wilson because they took a lot of Cicero's property in Wilson. There were a lot of homes destroyed there. And there's Decker Brook down there in Wilson that's always been a problem, and I think part of that problem is [Interstate] 91. Now I used to

drive [Interstate] 91 all the time, but I'm older now and I'm scared of it now with the lanes on both sides.

BALDINI: Now, do you remember the politics around the Vietnam War?

PARKER: Vietnam War was horrible, and the awful sad thing there was the way the servicemen were treated. Very... That was very controversial. As a matter of fact, my accountant [Bill Chiodo was in the] Vietnam War, and he's still wearing a POW [Prisoner of War] bracelet. I think the black flag that flies on the town green, he was instrumental in getting it. No, it was a horrible war. I guess what they're saying is it was very poorly run.

1:16:09.6

BALDINI: What was the atmosphere in town? Were there any protests that were going on in town or what kind of support did the community...?

PARKER: Well, I guess not much support. There was a lot of the young men... See, I had three nephews whose numbers were coming up. They didn't go either. My son [Douglas H. Parker] didn't go. A lot of the young men didn't go. They went off to college or something. It was a very unfair... I guess nothing was accomplished, but here we go again, I guess [with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars], or here we are still. I don't know.

BALDINI: Do you see a lot of similarities between, kind of, the atmosphere around the Vietnam War and the war in the Middle East today?

PARKER: Yes, I do except for one big difference: now nobody dares say anything against the troops.

BALDINI: Today?

PARKER: Today. They dared in Vietnam. It was very controversial. But people now within my own family [say], "Well, I don't know what we got into Iraq for" and "We shouldn't have gone to Iraq." I will never forget December 7, 1941. I'll never forget that. And I'll never forget September 11 [2001].

BALDINI: What were you doing on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked?

PARKER: We had been listening to the radio in the afternoon, and then that night I was walking over to the Epworth League [at the Methodist Church] and I said, "Gee whiz." You know, we were all talking about it.

BALDINI: What was your feeling [about the attack at Pearl Harbor]?

PARKER: I was fifteen [years old] so I don't think I thoroughly understood it. You know, I don't think I thoroughly understood it. Boy, I got to understand it fast! And on September 11, I was on my way to a First Church Women's Club meeting. We

walked in there and some of the women were crying. One woman's nephew was killed or she thought he was killed, and it turned out he was. And I was scared. I figured they [terrorists] were going to just keep on coming.

BALDINI: Was he in one of the buildings?

PARKER: He was in one of the [World Trade Center] buildings. I know of... I didn't personally lose anybody on September 11, but I knew of several people who were there. I'm still scared. I'm too old now but I'm trying to impress on my two grandchildren that I have in Keene [New Hampshire]. I told them at the time that life will never be the same. I told you that life will never be the same. It's an entirely, entirely different world we've got now than we had then.

BALDINI: It's a different way of fighting and...

1:20:12.3

PARKER: Well, it's so entirely different that we don't know where the enemy is. At least at Pearl Harbor, we knew where they were. Vietnam, I don't know. That was so poorly... I guess the point there was [that it was] poorly run. The similarity is the length of time.

BALDINI: Were there any Japanese families living in Windsor in World War II?

PARKER: I don't know. I don't know.

BALDINI: I was just wondering what the community felt about these families because I know that in other communities, especially in California, a lot of families were put into make-shift [camps].

PARKER: Well, I'm of two minds of that. I can see where that must have been a terrible thing and a lot of it was very, very unjust; but on the other hand... Well, maybe we're going through the same thing with the Muslims now. Who do you trust and who don't you?

BALDINI: What about [John F.] Kennedy's assassination and Martin Luther King's assassination? Do you remember?

PARKER: Oh, yes.

BALDINI: Yeah, especially being so involved in Republican politics.

PARKER: Well, the Kennedy assassination, we were glued to the TV for three days. And we went to church and came back and I said, "OK. We're going to sit down and eat together and turn on the TV" and they'd shot Lee Harvey Oswald. Very obviously he was shot to shut him up. Martin Luther King I was worried about. Lefty Gomez, retired Yankees pitcher, was renting the house across the street, and his daughter was home from Bay Path [College], and Debbie [Parker] was here and

they wanted her to come over. So I stood on this porch and made sure she was across the street and in, and she wasn't to come back across the street before she called because they told me in Hartford there were terrible riots. I don't think we had them right here in Windsor, but you never knew. You never knew what was going to happen.

BALDINI: Well especially being so close to Hartford. So you read about, heard about the riots in Hartford. What type of things were you hearing?

PARKER: I heard there was looting and there was gangs and the whole thing. No, September 11-- that still scares me. I don't think that's anywhere near over.

BALDINI: So your family had a TV in this house. You and Frank had a TV. Did your parents have...?

PARKER: We had a TV down in Glen Brook in Stamford. We had a TV there. We had a TV before my mother and father did, I think. Yeah.

BALDINI: Let's talk about your involvement in the [Windsor] Historical Society because you've been a volunteer here for many years. So when did you first become involved? 1:23:15.1

PARKER: Well, why I became involved is... I was doing volunteer work up at Windsor Rehab, and I was wheeling people around and Margaret Martindale who was volunteering at your place [Windsor Historical Society] at the time said, "I don't think being up there and wheeling people around with Parkinson's [disease] and then coming home to a husband with Parkinson's... You know, Libby, you ought to be doing something that's fun. And my mother and father were very active in the Historical Society, and I think Frank's mother [Mary Porter Parker] might have been. I think they both were. I know my mother was very much interested in historical because she was a member of the D.A.R. [Daughters of the American Revolution] so she had gotten into it. So I said, "What do you have to do at the Historical Society?" and she [Margaret Martindale] said, "You'd be good as a tour guide." That's what we called them in those days. You have to belong. So I went up, and I ___ with Carol Ann Stephenson who lives down the street here. I worked with her to begin with.

BALDINI: What was the Historical Society like back then?

PARKER: Well, it was just... there was the [L. P.] Wilson Museum, but then they... The room in the (I'm still calling it the Fyler House instead [of the] Sarah Strong house), there's that room there that was where the office was and where people came. I worked with Carol Ann Stephenson, and I can't think of... One of the ones that was fun to work with was Pat and Laura Patterson, Pat Patterson and Laura Patterson. They loved it!

BALDINI: So [what] year, do you remember what year you started volunteering or how long you've been volunteering there?

PARKER: Well, it's got to have been... My mother was gone so it was past [19]'65. I don't know. In the [19]'70s. Frank was still alive when we dedicated the Mills Museum.

BALDINI: What year did Frank die?

PARKER: 1991.

BALDINI: So, why don't you talk a little bit about your work because you said you worked in Vivian Webster's dress shop, right? So what did you do there? Do you remember what years it was? Can you tell us a little bit about Vivian's dress 1:25:40.4 shop?

PARKER: Well, she was over here [176 Broad Street] where Webster Bank and all those people are. And they got into the Chamber of Commerce, and I loved selling clothes anyway. And I guess I walked in one day and said, "If you ever need anybody, I'd love to work..." Well, I worked there just part time; but the thing that got to be funny was that I would be on duty, shall we say (I guess she opened at 9:30 or something), and then somebody'd walk in the door, and I'd go, "Oh, hi!" And then Viv would say, "Who's that?" [and I'd say], "Well, that's so and so and so" and go through their life history. She and Ed [Webster] would be sitting there laughing and they said, "Everybody that walks through the door, and Libby would say 'I knew them. I went to school with them,' " and blah, blah. So...

BALDINI: So, did you know Vivian before?

PARKER: No. Nope, I didn't. And then her husband, Ed, I think, had been working for the State of Connecticut, and then he quit and he came to work with her. And then her daughter Cheryl worked there.

BALDINI: So, what years were you working there? About how old were you?

PARKER: Well, I've got to have been in my forties or fifties because my kids were grown. Debbie was not home. She was...

BALDINI: Can you talk a little bit about your kids? Their names? What years they were ...

PARKER: They were both adopted, and Debbie is now 59 [years old]. She was five months old when we adopted her down in Stamford. We adopted Dougie from the same agency, but we were up here and he was a year [old].

BALDINI: How old was Debbie? I think you said five months old.

PARKER: She's 59 [years old] now, but she was five months old. So we moved up here when she was about two [years old]. Dougie was one, and Dougie died when he was forty-two [years old].

BALDINI: And how many grandchildren do you have?

PARKER: I have four, and the two that I am closest to are in Keene [New Hampshire]. I have two that are in California, but I barely know them. Dougie was married and divorced twice. Debbie's been married and divorced twice.

BALDINI: Twenty-first century!

PARKER: The twenty-first century! Don't get me on that! Oh, dear, twenty-first century. No, Kimberly is twenty-six [years old] going on sixteen; and Christopher Boucher (they're Boucher's), Christopher is twenty-three; and Doug, Jr., is a week older than Christopher. He must be twenty-three. He's married. And Beth, Carolyn Elizabeth Parker, must be twenty, and I have never met her. She was born when they were separated. They're divorced. So I do keep track of them somewhat by sending them a check at Christmas and a check on their birthdays. Other than that, I don't. The other two are a different story.

BALDINI: So your kids both grew up in Windsor, obviously. What schools did they go to?

PARKER: Debbie went to John Fitch, from kindergarten right on through to freshman in high school, and she went up to Windsor High. And Dougie must have done the same thing. Frank's brother Fred and Marian [Parker] lived down the street, and they had three kids. Dougie and his first cousin, Christopher, (we've got Christopher's in this family), Dougie and Christopher and my Debbie and Patsy and Linda, and so they were cousins here. There were a lot of Parker relatives around here.

BALDINI: You said Frank was on the Board of Ed?

PARKER: No, he wasn't on the Board of Ed. He was on Town Council.

BALDINI: OK. Was anybody on the Board of Education?

PARKER: My father was.

BALDINI: When the kids were going to school, were you involved in any way with...

PARKER: Yes, I was in the PTA. I was a Girl Scout leader, and I didn't like it. I was a Cub master for Dougie. I was Boy Scout. I was PTA; I was in Women's Club of the First Church; I was active in politics with Frank. I was on the TPand Z [Town Planning and Zoning], but that was after Frank died. [I'm] still on the Republican Town Committee.

BALDINI: Town Planning and Zoning?

PARKER: But that was long after Frank was gone and so forth. But I did a lot of registering of voters. I have some real stories about that. Register of Voters and Frank and I worked on campaigns and I was active with him in the Chamber of Commerce. I didn't have any particular jobs, but I went to the meetings. Well, they had a dinner meeting once a month when you went with your spouse. They had it at the Windsor House, and they had a social hour first and a head table, and a speaker. Frank ran that whole thing. Some of the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce: one man who will remain nameless (I think he's just died), I swear that man wouldn't get up and go to the bathroom unless [he said], "Frank, can I leave the table for just a few minutes?" [And Frank would say] "Yeah, go ahead." [laughter]. I'd laugh. Frank was everything in the Republican Town Committee but he would never be chairman because he said being an independent insurance agent, you could be vulnerable because people could play dirty.

BALDINI: How long did Frank run his business for?

PARKER: Well, 'til he retired because of Parkinson's.

BALDINI: What year was that?

PARKER: About 1981-1982 I think. We came back up here [Windsor] in [19]'53, and he ran it by himself for about one year and then he was exhausted. Harry Ellingwood had been a field man for Aetna and had been visiting my father. Also I went to high school with Harry Ellingwood, but I hadn't kept contact with him at all. Harry came to the door when we were still living at 50 Elm [Street], and I opened the door, and "Oh hi, Harry." [And Harry said] "Hi, Liz. I understand somebody's taken your father's business over." And I said, "Yeah, my husband." So I introduced Harry to Frank, and they were very, very different personalities but he kept... They struck up a friendship, and then Frank said to me, "I'd like to ask Harry to join the firm." So he did. Harry bought in. And Harry's son David is running it now. It's Parker Ellingwood [Agency, Inc.]. They kept the name Parker. So, Parker Ellingwood. But David's very, very nice; but he's very different than... When Frank was alive, Frank and Harry, they were in everything. Your Historical Society and you've got a list of sponsors, they would have been in there somewhere. And they were both of them, Frank was on the Windsor's birthday, 350th birthday celebration [committee] representing the Chamber; and I have a picture (and you do too) up there [Windsor Historical Society library] of the cake. Well, he was chairman of that. Harry was an Elk [The Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America], charter member of the Elks. Frank was, too; but then it turned out that the Elks met at the same time that the Chamber did, so... Harry went right on to the Elks, and Frank ran the Chamber of Commerce.

BALDINI: Was Frank involved in the VFW at all?

PARKER: No, he's American Legion. He was American Legion.

BALDINI: How is that different?

PARKER: Well, American Legion guys played cards. American Legion [Gray Dickerson Post #59, American Legion] was in the Bell School up there [235 Palisado Avenue] for a long time. No, he was active in the American Legion. They were very active years ago. I don't think they're quite as active now although they sell poppies [paper flowers] and so forth. Frank was very, very (well, both of us are) patriotic. He was Boy Scouts. Going from being a paid field executive then he did a lot of volunteering.

BALDINI: So, what does a field executive do?

PARKER: They go out and organize Boy Scout troops, I guess. I don't know: form troops and get leaders, but it's a paid position. And Wilton [Connecticut] when we were there: gosh, we were just back from Ohio and well, it was a combination of work and honeymoon [and] the phone rings. "I understand you were active in the Boy Scouts. Would you like to form a Cub pack in Wilton?" We'd only been married three months, you know. Come on! Wait a minute! Anyway, no, he was always into volunteering for the Boy Scouts. He was a great youth leader but not me! Kids would get out of control. I told Debbie in Girl Scouts, she had two or three friends that I said, "They would get one look at me and say, OK. Let's start acting up! We can get to her! We can get to her." I'm now in role reversal with Debbie. I love her dearly. She's now bossing me around, which is OK.

1:35:05.4

BALDINI: So what about when the kids were growing up: did you sit down for family meals every day?

PARKER: Yes, we ate together. Up until Frank and Doug got in Little League and, of course, [then] it was grab a hamburger and out the door. Funny, years later when we were out in California visiting Dougie and his then wife, he said, "All I knew was you can go out and play, but you'd better be home when Dad got home at 5 o'clock." And I said, "I don't remember making that rule." [And Dougie said] "I just knew we were supposed to be home when Dad got home."

BALDINI: It was an unspoken rule.

PARKER: I was the one that was bouncing off the walls all the time. Frank was quieter than I was. Kids adored him.

BALDINI: What was Windsor like in the [19]'70s and '80s?

PARKER: Very vibrant. Well, all right, the [19]'80s. Frank's mother died in [19]'82, and I think Enfield Mall and all those places got going then. It was busy, and it was...

BALDINI: Do you remember where your children would hang out?

PARKER: At the Farm Shop [330 Broad Street]. They called it the "Farm Barn." Farm Shop; there wasn't any Cozy Corner.

BALDINI: Where was that?

PARKER: Well, right over here. It's Dom's [Dom's Broad Street Eatery] now next to Geissler's Supermarket, 318 Broad Street]. They hung out there. Debbie was in sports. Lord above, was she in sports!

BALDINI: What kind of sports did she do?

PARKER: Softball. You name it! And she did a lot of dating. She dated the guy up the street, Scott Macklin. They were an item. He was in and out of this house. I even got so I was buying bananas for him. Dougie was in Little League and they were both in the Windsor High [School] band. And Dougie had a set of drums, they met downstairs. Jack Kelleher...

BALDINI: Did you ever play an instrument growing up?

PARKER: Well, I took piano lessons, but I didn't last very long. I loved to dance. Frank and I were good dancers. Loved to dance, and I was in choirs: choirs in the high school, choirs in college, church choir. Church choir. I was in choirs. Debbie could pick up any instrument. She took piano lessons and I guess she was good, but Debbie could pick up any instrument. To this day, she still has a sterling silver flute that she's playing in some band somewhere, Nelson [New Hampshire], she said. A guitar; she plays a guitar. She and three or four other girls played guitars and something else, and played at somebody's wedding up there. Debbie's been in Keene [New Hampshire]. She went to Vermont Junior College and then she transferred to Keene and has been there ever since. Dougie played the drums and he was good. I could always tell when he was drumming because (people didn't know how I could stand it), but I'd be upstairs in the kitchen getting dinner and he and Jack Kelleher and (I can't think who the other kid was), would be downstairs. Dougie would put a record on and he'd drum to it.

BALDINI: Who were his favorite musicians or bands?

PARKER: Gene Krupa, he used to drum along with Gene Krupa. I can't think of who some of the others were. They gave lessons at John Fitch and he always won the prize for being... Because he had a drum pad my mother got him. Who was the Beatle that was the drummer?

BALDINI: Oh, George. It was George Harrison? [Ringo Starr]

PARKER: He'd come home and say, "I won again for being the best drummer."

BALDINI: That's great.

PARKER: But they were both in the band. Debbie played the tuba in the Windsor High [School] band. Linda Smith, who is married to John Carmon, taught her to play the tuba. Debbie was very active in high school.

BALDINI: The tuba is the big one, right?

PARKER: And I bore Kimberly half to death because every time they come down for Shad Derby and the Windsor High [School] band goes by, I always grab Kimberly [and say], "That's your mother's tuba." And Kimberly would say, "Mom, does Grammy have to tell me that every time the band goes by?" Yes, she does.

BALDINI: So, they hung out at the Farm Stand?

PARKER: Farm Shop.

BALDINI: The Farm Shop. Was that a kind of restaurant at that time?

PARKER: Yes, it was. And there was a time when drugs was getting flipped around there.

BALDINI: Well, this is in the [19]'70s and '80s. Did you ever catch your kids...

1:40:39.2

PARKER: No, but I'm pretty sure that Dougie tried it.

BALDINI: What was the atmosphere from parents in that time?

PARKER: And also they started the sororities, and I was just discussing this with somebody the other day. Sororities got started at Windsor High [School], and we got into things there because Debbie was asked to join and I wasn't having... Sororities in college, OK; but not in high school. I said, "You tell the kids that your parents won't allow you to join. You can blame Daddy and I."

BALDINI: What didn't you like about it?

PARKER: I think there was a lot of marijuana being passed around. I can't prove that. And there was a boys' group, and I can't think what the name of it was, and they were trouble! I can't think what the name of that was. [clock chimes]. We were very active with our kids. As I said, Frank had a Little League team. We were in it up to our necks.

BALDINI: So what was the atmosphere of parents during the [19]’70s when you figured there was a lot of pot going around?

PARKER: Well, that began the era... that began the era... Or the era was going in when the... Women were going off to work, and I did not have a burning career.

BALDINI: You were a homemaker?

PARKER: I was a homemaker. I had part-time jobs. I was a reporter for the *Thrifty Reminder* for a little while, and I worked for Viv Webster, and I did a lot of volunteering. I was very active in organizations. And my mother was across the street alone, and my mother broke both hips and broke shoulders. I had quite a responsibility there.

BALDINI: I think you were very busy.

PARKER: So, I was busy. Then my own health: I hadn’t had a heart surgery when my mother was alive, but she hadn’t been gone three weeks when I was starting that routine. I was busy and things. Somebody said, “Oh, you were a homemaker. You were sitting at home watching the ‘soapies’ and talking baby talk.” I said, “Oh, no I wasn’t.” I was up and out.

BALDINI: Do you think that’s a common misconception about homemakers?

PARKER: Yes, I do.

BALDINI: Were a lot of your friends who were raising their families they...

PARKER: They were home but they... I think I could have done more part-time [work]. I did go into part-time jobs. One of the things I feel bad about now, the complete break down of the family. So many kids now are being brought up by a single parent. I know of three different girls who lived with guys, who had a baby, with no intention of getting married. I feel sorry for those kids.

BALDINI: Was that going on at all when you were growing up?

PARKER: No. Well, if a girl had a baby, you didn’t know it or it was kept quiet. Not that I think there should be a stigma, but there is such a break down of the family now that it’s sad. In my own family (I’m not throwing rocks at anybody else) nobody’s had a baby yet. We keep kidding Christopher Boucher, “I hope you haven’t had any kids.” [And his reply is] “Not that I know of, Gram.” There is just such a breakdown of the family.

BALDINI: What do you think that has to do with?

PARKER: I think the Women’s Lib [Liberation] pendulum has swung too far. I am for equal rights and equal education and equal pay, yes. Equality, yes. An abusive

relationship? Forget it! Get out! I say that, but I think the pendulum has swung too far. It has swung so far that... As I say, my own family is kind of into it, and it's just swung too far. And I think the result is in your generation (maybe you can correct me on this), I see a generation of young men who are kind of "Ehh. Why should I bother to get married?" Am I wrong on that?

BALDINI: You know, some countries have housewives and women raising children, it's actually paid work. Government-paid work.

PARKER: Well, we call those nannies!

BALDINI: These are actually the mothers doing it. You get paid maternity leave and you get something like a subsidy from the government. You are paid for doing the very difficult work of raising a family.

PARKER: As a wife and mother?

BALDINI: Yes.

PARKER: I could have gotten paid for being a wife and mother?

BALDINI: [Laughter] If you lived in a different country.

PARKER: There's so much of this babies being murdered and so forth, and well, her boyfriend murdered the baby. Or the girlfriend of the boyfriend murdered the baby. We've got a terrible society right now that's...

BALDINI: Were you involved in any kind of women's rights or women's liberation growing up?

PARKER: No.

BALDINI: Were you aware of things going on?

1:46:37.5

PARKER: Yes, I was because I think if my mother had been born later... I think my mother was in a way more progressive than I was.

BALDINI: How so?

PARKER: Well, things that she talked about. She felt strongly that teachers should have had equal pay. Now, my mother in her later years (well no, my father was still alive)... My mother did a lot of tutoring. As a matter of fact, she tutored Marian who lived next door and later was my sister-in-law. In fact, she's still alive. Tutored her all the way through Chaffee [Chaffee School for Girls]. And then she later tutored Marian's daughter Patsy who had hepatitis and mono [mononucleosis] and lost a year of high school, and my mother tutored her. But

my mother always said, "I'm not tutoring any kid who isn't interested in learning. If they're going to come..." (because my mother was on crutches or something), "...they've got to be interested and they've got to do their share." And I don't think she even charged. My mother was a good teacher. So the only [one] she couldn't teach was me [laughter]! I was the only one she couldn't get through to.

BALDINI: Do you remember kind of when like birth control came out and what kind of... what the feeling was about it?

PARKER: There was no birth control when we were married in [19]'47. Frank had to go to New York or Massachusetts.

BALDINI: Because they were selling it there?

PARKER: Yes!

BALDINI: Were these pills or...?

PARKER: No! Condoms.

BALDINI: Oh, condoms. So they didn't even sell them around here.

PARKER: Didn't even sell them. And then they went to diaphragms, and they told the doctors that they couldn't sell diaphragms; and I remember Dr. [Daniel] Mack saying, "No government's going to tell me what I can do and what I can't do."

BALDINI: So was it, I mean, did people talk about this or was there education in school?

PARKER: Oh no. Heaven's no! Not in school. And there was a basket in the town hall. I can remember some (I can't even think who the guy was, and he's still there, too), some attorney I was with up there. He says, "Hey, Libby. You want a chocolate?" and I looked in the basket, and he laughed because it was a basket of condoms.

BALDINI: In the town hall? Wow! They don't do that now.

PARKER: No. There was sex education but, you know, it was nothing. Didn't mean a thing. They didn't even talk about menstruation, for gosh sakes.

BALDINI: So who taught the kids about this then?

PARKER: I guess they just learned it. I didn't understand the birds and the bees then and I don't understand the birds and the bees now! I don't understand what the birds and the bees do! [laughter]. Well, you see, now it should be more open than it was then. I admit that, but it's so open now that... let's back off just a little. And you know the swearing thing: my own grandchildren. I had to pass the word. I have a Thanksgiving dinner here (which is a picture I should show you). I have

Thanksgiving every year. Eventually. I've had Thanksgivings for years because Bill and Jenny were on Mountain Road, but their house was all stairs and my mother was on crutches. Frank had Parkinson's [Disease]; I had a bad heart. We couldn't get up and down the stairs, so I had Thanksgiving here. But the "F" word. My grandson is tossing it around. My two great nephews (whom I'm very fond of), tossing it around. So finally Debbie went back to Keene, and I said, "Debbie, I have a request." And, of course, she's all computers, and I don't even own one. I said, "Would you please pass the word that Grammy, Aunt Libby and Grammy, does not like that word. So please. Cool it."

BALDINI: When you were growing up, were kids swearing? What kind of language was being used?

PARKER: Well, not that! Now just to show you how progressive my mother was: one of the books that came out right after I was married was *From Here To Eternity*. My mother was a great reader. She wanted to be a librarian. She was a school teacher instead. In those days, you didn't phone everybody all the time. I guess I wrote here [home] and I said, "I'm not reading this book because the "F" word [is] every other word." My mother said, "Look. Forget that word." And Frank said, "In the service we just used that word. They just used it all the time." Now Frank was not a swearer. A little bit, but not to a great extent. And my mother said, "Just forget that word. Look at the theme. Read the book. Read the theme. Get the theme. Get the story. It's a wonderful story. Get the story. Forget the "F" word." [Libby said] "OK, Mom. All right." But you know, they just toss the language. They just toss it around as... I just sit there and go "Ugh." So I don't know. The pendulum has swung so far. I don't know if it will swing back or not.

1:52:25.6

BALDINI: Well, where do you see Windsor going in the next five, ten, twenty-five years?

PARKER: Well, we are very diversified. But they are still pushing for more diversity and I think that the diversity should stop now. I think we're well balanced. I think we're very well [racially] balanced. Because I don't expect to be around another ten years and I'm a complete minority which is, in a way, all right. You know, let's kind of balance it.

BALDINI: Sprinkling of all the...

PARKER: Sprinkling of everything.

BALDINI: What kind of hopes do you have for this town?

PARKER: That it will revitalize again and that there'll be stores again, that people will be out walking from store to store. I'm curious to know why Bernie's [appliance store] has gone out [of business]. That refrigerator I bought in the summer...

BALDINI: I just heard about this on the radio this morning.

PARKER: Everybody I know has bought something from there. I've got to admit, when the Enfield Mall first opened, I was up there three times one day. Went up [Interstate] 91, zoom zoom, came back, told Frank I just bought three sweaters, and, you know, zoom zoom, went back up. I admit, I did. I remember the first supermarket. There was one down in Wilson. I won't go to a supermarket. Well, of course, I do. I do own a cell phone from the town. My daughter, my heaven. They come down here, and I swear, Justin [Parker] is a cell phone from here to there! And my Christopher is calling some girl in Keene on the cell phone. Everybody's on the cell phone.

BALDINI: You have a cell phone through the town?

PARKER: The dial that 9-1-1 job.

BALDINI: OK, that's great.

PARKER: Now my daughter is hesitant because she... I have a pacemaker and should a person with a pacemaker be using a cell phone? And I haven't gotten a straight answer yet so I don't know. I don't know. Things are very bad right now. Windsor has never gotten the praise and the publicity and the credit for what it is. Grew up in the shadow of West Hartford. I don't know who it's in the shadow of now. You know, the north end of Hartford when I was growing up was a beautiful time, a beautiful part of Hartford. Windsor Street was beautiful.

BALDINI: A lot of those homes have been taken down now.

PARKER: Windsor Street was Italian restaurants and theater. It was all lovely. But Windsor has always been in the shadow of other towns. I don't know why. Don't know why. But, anyway.

BALDINI: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? I know you've thought a lot about these questions so I want to give you an opportunity.

PARKER: Well, Frank's family: his mother [Mary] was a Porter, goes right back to the original settlers. She came from East Hartford.

BALDINI: So, is your family associated with the original founders and all?

PARKER: Yes, yes. Frank and I are both charter members of the DFAW, Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor. My father's family did this end of Connecticut; my mother the Hawley's did that [west] end of Connecticut.

BALDINI: So they came here and then moved out to areas of Connecticut and then moved back?

PARKER: No. I mean my father's family was in Hartford and Windsor. My mother's family was in Brookfield, in that end of Connecticut. No, my father went back to Daniel Clark [1622?-1710], a Loomis, and a... I have a list of the descendants. Donna Siemiatkoski did... and then my mother, I'm in the DAR on my mother's number, and she traced her back to Nathaniel Keeler. What he did, I don't know; but he was in, dug a trench probably. A latrine. [laughter] Anybody can be in the DAR as long as they were there, they were there. But Frank's family and mine go back to the original settlers [of Connecticut].

1:56:50.

BALDINI: What do you think people in town should be most proud of?

PARKER: We should be proud of our Windsor Green which gets no credit whatsoever.

BALDINI: Beautiful green.

PARKER: It's a beautiful green. It gets no credit whatsoever. I think we have, not 100 percent, but having been involved in it, I think we have a fairly honest government in Windsor. It's not 100 percent. I work a lot on voting, and I think we have... on both sides, anybody who votes in Windsor can be sure that their vote is confidential. I think we have a good voting system. Our [voter] districting in Windsor is terrible. Here I am in Windsor Center, and I have to go all the way to Oliver Ellsworth [School to vote], so I think the districting in Windsor is terrible.

BALDINI: When I was on Poquonock Avenue in Windsor center, I had to go all the way to Poquonock center. I was only like a half a mile down the road, but I had to drive five miles!

PARKER: Well, I have to go all the way to Oliver Ellsworth. No the districting is terrible, but I think the voting on election day, they are very conscious of things being bipartisan, that you know what you're doing, and... I used to have Fifth District Headquarters here. We voted in the library. They do things a great deal differently now. I don't think there's as close a check up on who has voted and who hasn't, but it's all by computers now. I say, I used to have the Fifth District Headquarters here. We don't have a balanced, two-party system but they may come back. The pendulum swings. But I think we have a fairly honest government. I'd like to see things a little more checks and balances. I would federally, too. You know, you've got to have a checks and balance. Whoever is the minority has got to make a lot of noise to keep the majority in check. See, we've always been very much involved in politics. I'm not as much as I was.

BALDINI: Did you think growing up that you'd ever see a black president [Barack Obama] in your lifetime?

PARKER: No, probably not. I wouldn't have expected to ever see a woman president, but I bet we do.

BALDINI: I hope so.

PARKER: Well, I do and I don't. You see, you're talking to somebody who believes in a husband and a wife that have a daughter and a son and a cat and a dog and go to their grandmother's. That's kind of where I come from.

BALDINI: Very traditional.

PARKER: I'm kind of traditional. Women get to be the head of something, the top of something, and they get bossy! [laughter] I worked for a woman boss in B. Altman & Company, I had a woman boss there, and I swore when I left there I'm never going to work for a woman again. And then I worked for Viv Webster, but she was nice. I shouldn't make statements like that. I don't know, society is going pretty fast. I hope this country will get together. You almost don't know who to trust. Now, there's all these warnings about this Haitian thing [January 12, 2010 earthquake]: be careful what you give to, be careful what you give. We just had a speaker at the First Church Women's Club, a local policeman who works on scams and so forth, and [told us about] the scams out there. 2:01:00.8

BALDINI: This happened after 9/11. It happened after [Hurricane] Katrina.

PARKER: Well, its just plain happening because my phone will ring... the famous one is, "We're checking on your VISA card. We're checking your credit card. What your credit's like on your credit card." Well, at the present moment, I don't owe anything. I almost gave my number. I came that close! If you're not right on the ball, next thing you know, they've got your number.

BALDINI: Libby, I want to thank you very much...

PARKER: Now, you didn't ask me about my list of nicknames.

BALDINI: Oh yeah! Your nicknames! Because I call you Libby.

PARKER: I grew up all through school, Lizzy, Liz and Lizzy. And I said when I went off to school, I said to my mother, "Oh, I hate that name Lizzy." And she said (she had been somewhere), "I just heard a nickname 'Libby.'" And I said, "Oh, I like that." So I said, "How am I going to..." [And Mother said], "Nobody at Colby Junior [College] knows you, so at night your dorm will have a meeting." So I did. I went off and that night [I said], "I'm Elizabeth Bryant from Windsor, Connecticut. My nickname is Libby." And it stuck, but I have a hard time now because people who will send me something, Mrs. Libby Parker. Then my sheckles [hackles] go up, and I say, "You address things to me 'Mrs. Elizabeth Parker' or 'Mrs. Frank Parker.'" My mother said to me once, "Be careful that you don't go entirely by Libby. Your name is Elizabeth. Your nickname is Libby."

BALDINI: I think we get used to having nicknames as a...

PARKER: You get used to having nicknames.

BALDINI: I saw a letter in our collections...

PARKER: Well, that was one guy I dated for a short time. I must have said "Betty" by mistake. [laughter]. I just wrote a girl I graduated with who wanted to know about Mary [Clark] Giffin's funeral, and I signed it "Love, Liz." If I had known what Liz Taylor [actress] was going to do to the name Liz, I wouldn't have changed it because there wasn't a Liz Taylor then. There was no Liz Taylor then.

BALDINI: What Hollywood stars did you look up to or did you kind of want to be like...?

PARKER: Oh yes, Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. Oh God yes, there was some wonderful stars.

BALDINI: Did you try to follow a lot of fashions?

PARKER: I used to follow them but I haven't anymore. When my son was out there [in California], Frank and I went out to visit him, and [he asked], "What would you like to see?" I said, "I'd like to see Hollywood and Vine [streets]." [My son said], "Well, be careful and stay in the car and I'm locking the doors because there's all prostitutes out there now." [laughter] I said, "Oh, OK. Well then go fast through there."

BALDINI: Well, did you bring any photos that you'd like to take a look at? I'm going to put this [recorder] on Pause.

INDEX

A

Aetna Insurance Company	2, 23
African Americans	
in Windsor center	13
working tobacco	28
American Legion	37
American Publishing Company	4
Arthur	
Betty	8
Astaire	
Fred	10
Automobiles	
automatic transmission	22
availability of	7
Frank's	21
getting into trouble with	10

B

Ball	
Warren and Dorothy	29
Banks	
Mechanics	14
Windsor Federal	14
Windsor Trust	14
Barn	
Filley farm	24
Beatles	
The	38
Bicycles	22
Billings	
Henry	17
Birth control	42
Bliss	
Elisha Jr.	4
Harriet	4
Books	
<i>From Here To Eternity</i>	43
<i>Images of America</i>	
<i>Windsor</i>	24
Boucher	
Christopher	40, 44
Kimberly and Christopher (grandchildren)	35
Bradley Field	
Prisoners of war	17
soldiers from	7
Brooks	
Arthur, builder	28
Bryant	
Clarence	4
Hilliard	2
Hilliard, as a boy	27
Hilliard, death of	3, 21
Hilliard, health of	27
Hilliard-air raid warden	17
Hilliard-involved in town	28

Maida (Mrs. Edward)	21
Maida (Mrs. Edward)-wedding gown	20
Ruth (Hawley)	5, 40
Ruth (Hawley)-death of	34
Ruth, health of	43
Ruth, reading	43
Ruth, the gardener	12
Ruth, the teacher	41
Ruth-providing music	7
Buildings	
Broad Street, 176	34
Broad Street, 199	7
Broad Street, 330	38
Nagle Building	7
Palisado Avenue, 235	37
Plaza Building	2, 10, 14, 29
Buses	14, 23
Businesses	
Central Street Antiques	10
Farm Shop	38
Parker Ellingwood Agency	3
Skating Palace	9
Windsor Garage	22

C

California	32, 35, 37
Hollywood	47
Carlson	
Douglas	20
Carmon	
John	39
Linda (Smith)	39
Cell phones	44
Chiodo	
Bill	31
Church	
Congregational	26
Episcopal	26
First Church In Windsor	20, 26
First Church In Windsor-Women's Club	13, 31, 46
Grace Episcopal Church	26
Methodist	7, 14
Methodist-Epworth League	7, 9
Methodist-in World War II	17
Methodist-interior	8
Trinity United Methodist Church	26
Cicero	
property of	30
Civilian Conservation Corps	
camp of	15
Clark	
Clyde A.	13
Daniel	45
Clarke	
Irving	23
Clemens	
Samuel	4
Coal heat	12

Colbert	
Claudette-actress.....	47
Connecticut	
Brookfield.....	2, 3, 15, 26, 27, 45
East Hartford	44
Enfield	30
Madison	27
Stamford	3, 21, 29
Stamford-Glen Brook	33
Stonington-Lord's Point	25
West Hartford.....	44
Wilton.....	21, 29
Windsor Locks	15
Creamery Brook.....	23
Crockett	
Samuel.....	5

D

Dancing.....	7, 38
at John Fitch High School	6, 11
Fox trot.....	7
jitterbug	7
supervision of.....	8
Dating	7, 9, 11
Daughters of the American Revolution.....	33, 45
Decker Brook.....	30
Depression	
The Great.....	3, 14, 15
Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor.....	44
Diversity	
racial balance	43
Doctors	
Clark, Clyde A.....	13
MacCready, William H.....	13, 18
Mack, Daniel	42
Monacella, John M.	13
Zeiner, Raymond E. (dentist).....	13
Dorchester	
Rev. Donald.....	9, 17
Dorsey	
Tommy	7
Drugs, marijuana.....	39

E

Ellingwood	
David	36
Harry	36
Ellsworth	
Florence.....	13, 21
Jean (Northrup).....	20
Mary (Ransom).....	20

F

Families	
today (2010)	40

Filley	
farm of	23
Joe24	
Frank Parker Memorial Beautification Award	29
Friends.....	5
in other villages.....	9

G

Gable	
Clark-actor	47
Gardens	12, 24
Giffin	
Mary Clark.....	5, 8, 20, 47
Girl Scouts of America.....	37
Gomez	
Lefty-Yankees pitcher.....	32
Green	
"Uncle Tubb"	18
Arthur.....	18
family of.....	12, 23
George.....	8
Marian.....	5, 18, 41
Mason C.....	18
Norman	18

H

Hale	
Dr. Virginia.....	16
Hartford	
Circus Fire.....	16
city-of-vibrancy.....	9
race riots in.....	33
Windsor Street	44
Hawley	
cousins	4
family of.....	44
Grandmother	26
John of Brookfield	20
Julia Alice (maternal grandmother).....	3
Rev. Franklin	3
Rev. Franklin-death of	4
Ruth Fairchild (Bryant).....	2
Houses	
Broad Street, 160	2, 3
Broad Street, 275	2
Broad Street, 296	2
Elm Street, 50	3, 11, 36
Elm Street, 50-heating with coal.....	12
Elm Street, 546	24
Elm Street, 77 - lot dimensions	24
Moorlands, 5	29
Mountain Road	43
Palisado Avenue, 546.....	23
Pilgrim Village.....	30
post World War II	30
Stony Hill.....	2
Hoyt	

William., school principal	6
Hurricane	
1938.....	27
Katrina.....	46

I

Ice skating.....	25
Insurance	
business of in Windsor	3, 15, 36

K

Keeler	
Nathanial	45
Kelleher	
Jack.....	38
Kennedy	
John F.-assassination of.....	32
King	
Bill.....	29
Martin Luther-assassination of	32
Krupa	
Gene	38

L

Loomis	
family of	45
Loomis Pond.....	25
Loucks	
Margaret	28
Stan.....	28

M

MacCready	
Dr., son of-Korean War	18
William H.	13
Mack	
Dr. Daniel	42
Macklin	
Scott.....	38
Madigan	
Miss - teacher	5
Marijuana.....	39
Marriage	
and school dances	7
current attitude toward.....	41
Martindale	
Margaret	33
Massachusetts	
Springfield.....	23
McCarthy	
Joe23	
Memorial Day.....	27

Meskill	
Tom.....	29
Migrant workers	27
Miller	
Glenn.....	7
Mills	
Marguerite.....	5
Monacella	
John M.	13
Movie theater	
Palace (in Hartford).....	10
Plaza.....	10
Tunxis	10
Music	
listening/dancing to.....	6
Muslims.....	32

N

Nagle	
Mr. and Mrs.	7
Nearing	
Jane	13
New England Air Museum.....	16
New Hampshire	
Keene	32, 44
New London	20
Norris	
Jean	24
Northrup	
Alex	20
Jean (Ellsworth)	20

O

Obama	
President Barack	45
Olson	
Elaine-WHS curator.....	21
Oswald	
Lee Harvey.....	32

P

Palisado Cemetery	27
Parenting	40
Parker	
Bill	18
Christopher.....	35
Debbie.....	32, 34, 37, 38, 43
Douglas H.	31, 34, 37, 38, 39, 47
Douglas H.-Viet Nam	18
Elizabeth-attending church as a teenager	26
Elizabeth-birth date of.....	6
Elizabeth-dating	11, 20
Elizabeth-grandchildren.....	32, 35, 39, 40, 43
Elizabeth-health of	29, 40, 43
Elizabeth-high school graduation.....	16

Elizabeth-homemaking	40
Elizabeth-honeymoon	37
Elizabeth-in New York City	19
Elizabeth-involvement in politics	29
Elizabeth-learning to drive	22
Elizabeth-nicknames	46
Elizabeth-registering voters	36
Elizabeth-singing groups	38
Elizabeth-social life in high school	7, 27
Elizabeth-summer vacation as child	4
Elizabeth-volunteer work	33, 35
Elizabeth-wedding dress of	20
Elizabeth-wedding of	20
Elizabeth-Windsor Historical Society involvement	33
Elizabeth-working for V Marie Shop	34
Frank	11
Frank - active in Boy Scouts	37
Frank-350th anniversary cake	36
Frank-and the Green family	18
Frank-as Boy Scout field executive	19
Frank-birth date	19
Frank-courtship	18
Frank-death of	34
Frank-Eaton Manufacturing	21
Frank-health of	33
Frank-in the Chamber of Commerce	29, 36
Frank-in the service	19, 43
Frank-insurance business	36
Frank-leaving employment with Boy Scouts	21
Frank-retirement of	36
Frank's father	18
Fred	18, 21, 35
Justin	44
Linda	35
Marian	35
Mary (Porter)	25, 33, 44
Patsy	35, 41
Parker Ellingwood Agency, Inc.	3, 36
Parks	
Keeney	26
Sage Park Race Track	28
Washington	15, 30
Washington-ice skating	25
Patterson	
Pat and Laura	33
Politics	
Republican headquarters	29
Poquonock	25
desirability to live there	28
public transportation to	23
Pratt & Whitney	21
Putnam	
Ginny	18

R

Ransom	
Mary (Ellsworth) and Ford	20
Real estate	
business of	3
Register of Voters	36

Republican Town Committee	28, 29, 36
Restaurants	
75 Restaurant	26
Cozy Corner	7, 14, 38
Dom's Broad Street Eatery	38
Farm Shop	38, 39
Whistle Stop Cafe	7
Windsor House	36
Rimosukas	
John	5
Roads	
Bloomfield Avenue	7, 30
Broad Street, 311	26
Central Street, 15	22
Deerfield	25
Dirt or paved?	25
Elm Street	30
Elm Street, developing it	23
Hillcrest	28
I-91	30, 44
Palisado Avenue, trolleys to	23
Parkview Drive	30
Poquonock Avenue	7
Route 218	30
Rt. 25 in Brookfield, CT	4
Stony Hill	2, 23
Union Street	10
Wilton	28
Windsor Street	44
Roberts	
Cliff	24
Rogers	
Ginger	10
Roller skating	10
Skating Palace	9

S

Sage Park Race Track	28
Schools	
arrival of students from Wilson	9
Bay Path College	32
Bell School	37
Board of Education	28, 29, 35
Chaffee School for Girls	41
Colby Sawyer Junior College	5, 16, 19, 46
East Hartford, CT-teaching in	2
H. Sidney Hayden	5, 9
John Fitch High	5, 6
John Fitch High-Baby Day	8
John Fitch High-blending students from villages	9
John Fitch High-Junior Prom	7
Marguerite Mills nursery school	5
Mount Holyoke College	2
Oliver Ellsworth	45
Roger Ludlow	5, 9
Saint Gabriel's Parochial	5
sex education in	42
Springfield College	19
Windsor High School	28
Windsor High School-sororities	39

Searle	
Inez.....	6
Sears , Roebuck and Co.	
houses of.....	12
Selig	
Family of.....	10
September 11, 2001.....	31, 46
Shad Derby.....	27, 39
Siemiatkoski	
Donna.....	45
Simpkin	
Bill.....	22, 28
Stephenson	
Carol Ann.....	33
Stony Hill	
desirability to live there.....	28
Stores	
A&P.....	14
B. Altman and Company.....	19, 46
Bernie's (household appliances).....	43
Central Street Antiques.....	10
Dillon's Market.....	13
drug stores.....	13
Enfield Mall.....	14, 30, 38, 44
First National Grocery.....	14
G. Fox department store.....	16
Geissler's Supermarket.....	38
Michael's Jewelry Store.....	25
Prouty's Drug Store.....	7
Sage Allen department store.....	16
shopping centers.....	14
Sisitzky's Market.....	13
Smith & Burk.....	14
Steiger's department store.....	14, 16
V Marie Dress Shop.....	14, 34, 40
Sunday dinner.....	18
Swearing.....	42
Swimming	
at Washington Park.....	15

T

Taylor	
Elizabeth-actress.....	47
Teachers	
Alconis, Mrs.....	5
Brown, Adeline.....	5
Brown, the Misses.....	5
Crockett, Sam.....	5
dislike of.....	6
Hoyt, William.....	6
Madigan, Miss.....	5
Rimousukas, John.....	5
Searle, Inez.....	5, 6
Wilson, Mary.....	5
Television	
owning one.....	33
Thanksgiving.....	42
Tobacco	
Jamaican workers.....	28
migrant workers.....	27

working in.....	27
Tourists home.....	24
Trolleys.....	23
tracks.....	25
Twain	
Mark.....	4

V

V Marie Dress Shop.....	14, 34, 40, 46
Veterans Cemetery.....	27
Voting	
Fifth-district Headquarters.....	45
in Windsor.....	45

W

Walking	
in Windsor center.....	14
Wars	
in Iraq and Afghanistan.....	31
Korean.....	18
Vietnam.....	18, 31
World War II.....	3, 7
World War II affected social life.....	11
World War II-air raid sirens.....	17
World War II-Bradley Field.....	17
World War II-departing soldiers.....	8
World War II-fighter planes.....	17
World War II-Germany.....	18
World War II-Honor Roll.....	17
World War II-Japanese in Windsor.....	32
World War II-Methodist Church.....	17
World War II-Pearl Harbor.....	31
World War II-picture of servicemen.....	9
World War II-planes and dog fights.....	17
World War II-prisoners of war at Bradley Field.....	17
World War II-servicemen returning home.....	18, 19, 30
World War II-spotting planes.....	17
World War II-War Bonds.....	17
Webster	
Ed 34	
Vivian-dress shop.....	34, 40, 46
Wilson	
Mary-teacher.....	5
village of.....	30
Windsor	
350th birthday.....	36
changes in.....	28
government in.....	45
in praise of.....	44
population of.....	3
races in.....	3
racial balance.....	43
Town Council.....	35
town green.....	27, 45
Town Planning and Zoning Committee.....	36
voting districts.....	45
Windsor Chamber of Commerce.....	28, 34, 36

Windsor Garden Club 13
Windsor Historical Society
 L. P. Wilson building..... 33
 Mills Building..... 34
Women
 leadership positions 46
Women's Liberation..... 40, 41
Works Progress Administration projects 15

Z

Zeiner
 Raymond E. 13