

## **Paul Dorf**

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Interviewers: Ruth Terwilliger and Paula Bruno  
Transcribers: Janena Benjamin, February 2006 and Laura Cabbage-Draper, March 2019  
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Abstract: Paul Dorf (1911-2001) was born in Vienna, Austria. He immigrated to America and owned a chicken and fruit farm in Franklin Township. Because of Mr. Dorf's experience as a produce wholesaler, he was asked to take over the management of the Metuchen Inn by the Metuchen Inn Corporation in 1939. According to Mr. Dorf, the Metuchen Inn at 424 Middlesex Avenue possessed a long and prominent history extending well over a hundred years. However, his recollections are mainly comprised of those events occurring during his years there. Mr. Dorf retired in 1992. He was congregant of Neve Shalom in Metuchen and his son, Martin, attended Metuchen schools and graduated from Metuchen High School in 1962.

During this interview, Mr. Dorf discusses the history of the Metuchen Inn as well as how he became manager of the Metuchen Inn and how he ran the business during the mid-twentieth century. He touches upon some of the famous guests the stayed at the inn, including military generals, politicians, and television stars.

Interview note: Mr. Dorf is not a native English speaker; errors in his grammar and syntax have been left as is in the transcription with minor edits to avoid unintentionally changing the meaning of his words.

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P. Bruno: [recording begins mid-sentence] ... a little bit about the history. How old is the building and when was it first built?

**P. Dorf: I do believe there is no paper here to tell you exact age of the building.**

P. Bruno: Can you give sort of an approximation?

**P. Dorf: Approximation, it is far over hundred years—far, far over hundred years, approximately. That's all what I heard. I wasn't born on that time. [laughs]**

P. Bruno: Okay, well when did you come into the inn?

**P. Dorf: I came into the inn in 1939.**

R. Terwilliger: And who did you purchase it from, Mr. Dorf?

**P. Dorf: I didn't purchase it—that's a corporation.**

R. Terwilliger: I see.

**P. Dorf: The Metuchen Inn is a corporation, founded in 1923.**

R. Terwilliger: So you just more or less then became a manager or whatever it's called at that time?

**P. Dorf: That's correct. Whatever you say.**

P. Bruno: How did you come to get the job of manager?

**P. Dorf: Because I was interested in this area and through them that I supplied all the hospitals around here and the industry with poultry from the farm which we have in Franklin Township.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, you had a farm in Franklin Township?

**P. Dorf: We still have it.**

R. Terwilliger: You still do. A poultry farm still?

**P. Dorf: It was. It is now a fruit farm.**

R. Terwilliger: A fruit farm. So then you didn't actually live here at the inn with your family?

**P. Dorf: No.**

R. Terwilliger: You just managed it.

**P. Dorf: Yes, that was partly when my boy [Martin Dorf] went to Franklin Township to Middlebush to school in the kindergarten and he caught pneumonia at that time. And that's when I took him away and brought him over here. As a residential, he went here to school and graduated here.**

R. Terwilliger: From Metuchen schools?

**P. Dorf: From Metuchen schools. And went from Metuchen—he went to Rutgers [University] and from Rutgers he went to Duke Medical [School in North Carolina] and now he's at Harvard [University in Massachusetts] and he's—**

R. Terwilliger: He's a surgeon, isn't he?

**P. Dorf: No, he is a pathologist.**

R. Terwilliger: Pathologist. I see. And he teaches at Harvard now?

**P. Dorf: He's not teaching. He is the head of the pathology department.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, you must be very proud!

**P. Dorf: I think he has the best knowledge a person could get in that field, I think.**

R. Terwilliger: It's kind of nice to think it started right here in Metuchen, you know, in the Metuchen schools.

**P. Dorf: Well, the Metuchen [High] School was absolutely not good. I have to state that very clearly if somebody want to know it. There were five boys which went to Rutgers and only one boy graduated in three years, and that was my boy. The rest of them flunked out, not that they were dumb. They were maybe smarter as my boy, but not educated enough to go to college. Because a college boy before he goes to college, they should train him to learn the library of—to handle a library. That if he wants something to know, he couldn't go to a teacher if he's in college and say, "What is this, I didn't understand that." There isn't such a thing.**

R. Terwilliger: No.

**P. Dorf: And if he want to know it, then he has to go to the library and pick up in the library what is wrong or what he doesn't understand and they didn't train him here. Absolutely not. He went in the advanced classes. That doesn't mean absolutely nothing. And he was not the best in the class, for the other one which flunked out.**

R. Terwilliger: That's interesting, really interesting.

**P. Dorf: So I speak very clearly. Normally they say, "Always my boy is the best" or "my children are the best," which was not a fact.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, it isn't always the brightest people that are successful, there's a lot more to being a success than just intelligence.

**P. Dorf: I believe that. But I know that everyone which flunked out from this Rutgers and from other schools, from that particular year I'm talking only, they are absolutely high-graded for college and not educated enough to go to college.**

R. Terwilliger: Right, I understand what you're saying.

**P. Dorf: Very clear I express myself. Not that I say that because I pay taxes here in Metuchen and the school was not right handled for it at that time. I don't know how it is now. Now, I'm not interested.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, what was Metuchen back at that time? I mean we're talking about in the thirties now—it was a very small town, wasn't it?

**P. Dorf: That is correct. Yeah. When my boy went to school—he's not in the service—he graduated here in 1962. He's young; he's only thirty-three years old. So [19]62 that is not—**

R. Terwilliger: Not so long ago. No.

- P. Dorf:** –so long ago. That is correct.
- R. Terwilliger: I thought you were talking that he went back in the forties or something to school.
- P. Dorf:** No, when he went to public schools, he went here to public schools after the kindergarten, when Mr. [Elmo] Spoerl used to be the principal here. Because Mr. Spoerl used to come every day in here; he ate here because his wife was paralyzed at that time. Then she died later. I said, we're talking now from 1945, [19]46, [19]47, [19]48, [19]49, [19]50.
- R. Terwilliger: What is your next question?
- P. Bruno: Just getting back to the inn a little bit, you say it's over a hundred years old or so. Has there been any additions put on it?
- P. Dorf:** Yes, always. The last addition was put on in 1913.
- P. Bruno: Uh-huh. And what was the addition?
- P. Dorf:** The wing from the rear, the wing of the rear. Above this the building out—above this wall, pardon me.
- P. Bruno: Above the wall.
- P. Dorf:** Yes.
- P. Bruno: So that would include the bar area as a new addition?
- P. Dorf:** No, the bar area is the original room; but adjacent to the bar area, this is the last construction which was put on. And there is not only one thing which was put on, many other items. The lobby was put on—that was a roadhouse.
- R. Terwilliger: A roadhouse?
- P. Bruno: What's a roadhouse?
- P. Dorf:** Same thing like a motel. At that time, it [was] called a roadhouse. But George Washington was not staying here.
- R. Terwilliger: That's interesting. He never stayed here. [laughs]
- P. Bruno: Were there any other inns in the area when you took over the Metuchen Inn in the late thirties?
- P. Dorf:** Not that I know. There was an inn named the Ramble Inn [at 36 Middlesex Avenue], which was next where the bank is at the present time, but they had no rooms. The word inn was just as a restaurant. The two sisters handled the restaurant.
- R. Terwilliger: The Litterst girls [Elizabeth and Louise Litterst].

**P. Dorf:** That's correct, exactly.

P. Bruno: Did they provide competition with you?

**P. Dorf:** No, we never had any competition, please.

P. Bruno: Never?

**P. Dorf:** Never.

R. Terwilliger: And what kind of people came here back then? Were they just local people?

**P. Dorf:** Oh no, no. We had names here which—well for example, during the war, that Camp Kilmer was managed by General [Harold R.] Duffie. The home of General Duffie—I shouldn't say the home, but the place where he hanged out all day—or somebody want to have him, they had to call here [at Metuchen Inn].

R. Terwilliger: Oh really? Oh, that's interesting!

**P. Dorf:** Yes. We had more than General Duffie, we had many. I just don't want to mention all the names because I don't know if that is the right way or the wrong way.

P. Bruno: Can you mention just a few?

**P. Dorf:** Of the generals?

R. Terwilliger: Yeah.

**P. Dorf:** No, I don't think that is right. But General Duffie was the manager or the responsible person for the Camp Kilmer—that's enough and I say that.

P. Bruno: Beside generals—

**P. Dorf:** With the generals, they were only for short periods here. Other ones stay over in the Camp Kilmer for a month or two months, or some of them got discharged from overseas. They had to come to the Camp Kilmer and they all was—I wouldn't say all, but I think almost all of them was here.

R. Terwilliger: Do you have any contact with—is this General, is it, Duffie?

**P. Dorf:** Duffie. He's dead, I believe.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, he's dead now. Did you keep up any kind of correspondence with you?

**P. Dorf:** Yes, we do have congratulation cards for Christmas and et cetera, but years back. They are in the box of our correspondence.

P. Bruno: Besides military personnel, were there any other famous people who came to the inn?

- P. Dorf:** Yes, yes. **Henry Ford [founder of Ford Motor Company].**
- P. Bruno: Wow.
- P. Dorf:** **Arthur Treacher [English film and stage actor].**
- R. Terwilliger: Arthur Treacher?
- P. Dorf:** **That's correct. Ed Sullivan [American television host and reporter].**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious! Well tell us a little bit. First Henry Ford—was he here visiting Edison?
- P. Dorf:** **No, he came here to—but I tell you what I heard, the principle, how he came to this area. There used to be a Major [George] Geiger [commander of the American Legion, 1933-1934] in Metuchen. He used to be the head of that building down there—that military bar—what do you call it, dear?**
- R. Terwilliger: The military bar? Oh, you mean the masonic [lodge]?
- P. Dorf:** **Not masonic. Masonic, that is a club. When you go down—**
- R. Terwilliger: The American Legion?
- P. Dorf:** **That's it—the American Legion. He was the head of the American Legion. And he was a clock antique collector, and he sold and he bought. And Henry Ford was also a collector and he came over here to buy from Major Geiger some merchandise. He used to live in the [159] Lake Avenue. And that's how he [Henry Ford] came over here, and he bought the property for the Lincoln-Mercury Plant [along Route 1 South in Edison].**
- R. Terwilliger: He did? I didn't realize Henry Ford—
- P. Dorf:** **So I heard that. I don't want to say that I know 100 percent that's how he came to this area, and that the Lincoln-Mercury Plant was bought.**
- R. Terwilliger: Right, yes. It was hearsay. That's very interesting.
- P. Dorf:** **Ed Sullivan, he took films here in the Lincoln-Mercury Plant on the Sunday show.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, his Sunday [show; *The Ed Sullivan Show*].
- P. Dorf:** **At that time, it was a Sunday show. And he used to come in here with Mr. Riley [phonetic] that was the secretary of Henry Ford II [grandson of Henry Ford]. And then he was staying here. He was quite often here and many times he called me and said hello.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, that's really interesting.

**P. Dorf:** And that was about Ed Sullivan, very fine man. And Arthur Treacher—when he came here, that I could tell you the original how he came here. On Plainfield Avenue, there is a Dodge Agency that used to be a Rambler Agency.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I remember.

**P. Dorf:** Remember? And the name of that agency was—that broke there—what was his name?

R. Terwilliger: That I can't remember.

**P. Dorf:** And Arthur Treacher financed him. And when they opened the place, Arthur Treacher was staying here for eight days and he was the man that brought the people in.

R. Terwilliger: I have to show my ignorance now in saying, who is Arthur Treacher? I mean I know Arthur Treacher's Fish & Chips [seafood restaurant chain].

**P. Dorf:** Yeah, but the movie actor.

R. Terwilliger: Oh he was English, right?

**P. Dorf:** English—that is correct. He played always a bachelor. And I tell you how I know that it was Arthur Treacher. That was the best thing ever though. We had a fellow here in the bar sitting and Arthur Treacher was sitting with his wife in that corner over there. She was a heavy-set woman and Arthur Treacher is a slim fellow or he was older time already—he died when he was eighty or ninety or something like that. But anyway, that fellow in the bar, a good customer, steady customer from Perth Amboy, said to me, "Paul, who is that fellow?" Then he said—and he looked over, see that fellow never said "move" to anybody, but he just bothered him, you know? And then he said, you know he feel, *I must know him*. And then I said, "Well if you want to know, I look in the hotel register. He must be there." So I came back—I looked in the hotel register and it said "Treacher." So I didn't have my mind up that it was Arthur Treacher, so I said, "Treacher." He said, "That's him, that's him, I know it. That's him. You know that's the movie actor!" Then Arthur Treacher came to me and I spoke with him—he was here already three days—and I speak of when he got out, he never was very—he's just a dry man. Always was dry. When he laughs, I think that's a specialty for him. And he brought the check over to the bar and paid the bill. And that fellow, he comes in for years and years, he never spoke to somebody about very fine fellow—he was with General Cable [phonetic]—and he said, "Excuse me, are you Mr. Treacher?" He [Arthur Treacher] looked at him, he wouldn't answer. [laughs]

R. Terwilliger: He wouldn't answer?

**P. Dorf:** No, no, no, no, no, no, they don't do that. He's just dry as—

R. Terwilliger: Just a very private person.

- P. Dorf:** That's right. Now you could have the directors from Westinghouse [Electric Company], the directors from Englehard Minerals & Chemicals [Corporation], the directors from Revlon. General [Robert Wood] Johnson [II] used to come in here four or five times a week, from Johnson & Johnson.
- R. Terwilliger: What about Mr. [Harold] Edgar [of Edgar Plastic Kaolin Company], wasn't he—
- P. Dorf:** Oh, Edgar was staying here at the hotel.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh really?
- P. Dorf:** Sure. He had that house on the street, but Mrs. [Alyce] Edgar had an apartment in the Waldorf Astoria [New York], I believe. And when they came to Metuchen, she was staying here many times and when she was staying in that house by herself [at 335 Middlesex Avenue], we had to bring her the food over there. She wouldn't eat no food from nowhere else. And Mr. Edgar, he has a special type of food. He ate the steak, he chewed it and then he spit it out.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, just chewed the juice out?
- P. Dorf:** Very raw, red, typically. Always with a flower—
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I heard that.
- P. Dorf:** And very fine-looking man. And I remember in 1976<sup>1</sup>, one day Mr. Edgar came in and said, "Paul, I want to show you something." So he was waiting till I got out from that bar and he took me by the arm and I came outside and there he had a brand new Packard.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, a Packard?
- P. Dorf:** A Packard. All chrome and classic; it looked like a circus! But a very expensive car.
- R. Terwilliger: He was a very wealthy man, my goodness, yes. But that's where Englehard Industries started, from his business.
- P. Dorf:** He merged with Mineral & Chemicals and then [Charles] Englehard came in, in 1958 to [19]57, something like that. Englehard was always separate. The father of Englehard [Charles W. Englehard Sr.] was the only person in the United States which was allowed to handle gold.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, that's interesting.
- P. Dorf:** Because you were not allowed to buy gold. Since the last two years, we're allowed to buy gold. But Englehard, he supplied all the jewelry stores. Everybody had to buy from him. And now the company is Englehard Mineral & Chemicals and they are the biggest dealer in ores in the world, then the gold. When you read the newspapers you see all deportation of Englehard, you know.

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<sup>1</sup> Incorrect date.



- P. Bruno: Getting back to the inn, what services did it provide for the patrons?
- P. Dorf: Everything what was necessary.**
- R. Terwilliger: Lodging, food?
- P. Dorf: Lodging, food.**
- R. Terwilliger: Baths?
- P. Dorf: Baths, bar.**
- R. Terwilliger: And at that time though, I mean there was a bath at the end of the hall? I mean the rooms don't all have their own private baths?
- P. Dorf: That is correct. That is right, but there was no more than two rooms and a bathroom. Never.**
- R. Terwilliger: I see. You mean one bathroom provided for two sleeping quarters.
- P. Dorf: Yes, but there are rooms with baths.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, there are rooms with baths?
- P. Dorf: That is correct, right.**
- R. Terwilliger: And did you make those improvements when you came?
- P. Dorf: No, partly was here already.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh really? And what size staff did you have working for you? How many people?
- P. Dorf: We had on the floor—we had two girls. One was fifteen years here; the other one was nineteen years here, then got sick, et cetera. That was at that time. And then we had five people in the kitchen at that time. This year's, I don't—you know the Oak Hills Manor [Restaurant at 222 Plainfield Road]?**
- R. Terwilliger: Yes.
- P. Dorf: Original was made from Henry Pfeiff and Henry Pfeiff was the kitchen chef here.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, for goodness sake.
- P. Dorf: And Mrs. Pfeiff used to be in the Roosevelt Hospital as a dietician.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, that's interesting.
- P. Bruno: Did some of the people sort of live here?

- P. Dorf:** Permanently?
- P. Bruno: Yes
- P. Dorf:** No, that means permanently for what period you talk about. You know some people call when you stay long in a hotel that's three days or four days that they call that permanent, which I do not.
- P. Bruno: What's the longest somebody would stay at one time here?
- P. Dorf:** A month, two months, six months. We had people from General Motors [Company], from the Anchor Motor [unclear] Company, the executive who was staying here five years, yeah. That was a permanent party. And the reason why they were staying here, we were very close to them, comparable, and they liked it here so that's why they stayed here.
- R. Terwilliger: And, of course, this inn was all pre-motels in the area. I mean there was just no other place to stay really.
- P. Dorf:** Exact what you say. But still it's isolated with any competition, including Metuchen.
- P. Bruno: Was the inn used as a meeting place for businessmen?
- P. Dorf:** Also. Also, yes. They had wedding parties, which is in the present time also, meeting parties. All the governors from New Jersey had all the meetings here. Only I think the last one, [Gov. Brendan] Byrne, was not here or no organization which requested him.
- R. Terwilliger: Governor [George] Silzer then stayed here?
- P. Dorf:** Oh sure, Mrs. [Henrietta] Silzer. When he died, Mrs. Silzer with the daughter came here. That's all people which I can't mention. There are bigger people as Silzers.
- R. Terwilliger: You can't mention?
- P. Dorf:** Fred Pearse.
- R. Terwilliger: Fred Pearse?
- P. Dorf:** [unclear] Silzer.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, and he [Fred Pearse] stayed here too?
- P. Dorf:** And he used to be the highest lawyer in town here.
- R. Terwilliger: Well I know the Pearse name.
- P. Dorf:** George Pearse and Fred Pearse. And the other son is in Washington [District of Columbia], the head of the Water Department.

- P. Bruno: Were there any other political people?
- P. Dorf: A lot.**
- R. Terwilliger: But you hesitate to mention the names.
- P. Dorf: No, that's not right. I am not a politician—excuse me, I am not a politician. I refuse always to officially handle a politician organization.**
- R. Terwilliger: I respect you for your feelings about it.
- P. Bruno: How did the inn come to be so reputable?
- P. Dorf: In a way, to be honest, there was no competition. I don't believe I do not [have] any competition.**
- R. Terwilliger: But you don't run the inn as such today, do you?
- P. Dorf: Yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: It's still is a place you can come and stay?
- P. Dorf: The same principle, quality.**
- R. Terwilliger: You don't serve dinners though or anything?
- P. Dorf: We do serve hotel guests too.**
- R. Terwilliger: I see. I thought that you had sort of retired.
- P. Dorf: No, not so bad. We are more or less, but not so bad.**
- R. Terwilliger: On a smaller scale.
- P. Dorf: Right, right, right.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well I'm sure the competition is great today too.
- P. Dorf: There is still no competition for this place. We have the largest selected bar in the state.**
- R. Terwilliger: Largest what kind of bar?
- P. Dorf: Selected.**
- R. Terwilliger: Selected bar? Oh, here. I've heard about your—what is it—fifty-year-old scotch?
- P. Dorf: Two hundred and fifty years old. Fifty years, that's nothing. [laughs]**
- R. Terwilliger: How much can you sell that for? I mean what does a shot of that cost?

**P. Dorf:**           **The highest one is \$52.50.**

R. Terwilliger:    A shot! For one little–

**P. Dorf:**           **We have no shots. We have only drinks.**

R. Terwilliger:    Only drinks. [laughs] Has anyone ever bought that?

**P. Dorf:**           **We wouldn't have it if we don't sell it.**

R. Terwilliger:    Oh, I don't know whether anything is worth that much money. [laughs]

**P. Dorf:**           **I go along with you. But you have to understand what you drink to pay for it. If you do not understand, it makes no difference if you pay a \$1,000–**

R. Terwilliger:    Probably so smooth you'd want more!

**P. Dorf:**           **That's possible. [laughs] I don't drink so I couldn't answer that.**

P. Bruno:           What was your menu like? What sort of food did you serve?

**P. Dorf:**           **The menu was a selected menu. It was a Swiss European kitchen and the highest or the most selected menu you ever saw, we always had. Cooked mostly to order. We had no mass food here, never did and never will have. We don't take no working people in, in the hotel.**

R. Terwilliger:    What do you mean by working?

**P. Dorf:**           **Working clothing.**

R. Terwilliger:    Oh, I see. They have to have shirts and ties.

**P. Dorf:**           **It has to be selected. Not that they come with greasy fingers and smear up the doors or something like that.**

R. Terwilliger:    Right, right. But as far as, like my husband and I wanting to have dinner here now, you don't serve just people off the street?

**P. Dorf:**           **No. That's correct. That is correct.**

R. Terwilliger:    It's only people that stay in the [inn].

**P. Dorf:**           **Right, right.**

P. Bruno:           How many people are staying in the inn today?

**P. Dorf:**           **How many people staying in today? That I don't know what will be after one o'clock–that's impossible.**

P. Bruno:           But today I mean contemporary, how many people–

R. Terwilliger: The average, she means.

**P. Dorf: The average, in short words, it is pretty filled.**

P. Bruno: And are these regular customers? Most of them?

**P. Dorf: If not regular customers, they are recommended from industry or from very well-known organizations here.**

R. Terwilliger: Well now can you tell me about the bar? Can someone come in and sit at your bar in the evening?

**P. Dorf: The bar is public.**

R. Terwilliger: The bar is public.

**P. Dorf: Otherwise you wouldn't have a public license.**

R. Terwilliger: I see. One thing I wanted to get back to now—to revert back to the beginnings of this place. I'm interested in knowing how you—where did you learn hotel management?

**P. Dorf: The hotel management I learned through my customers. I supplied to New York, the biggest hotels from Waldorf Astoria, Hotel Astor—**

R. Terwilliger: From this farm that you had, you mean?

**P. Dorf: That is correct, and everybody want that I should take a place.**

R. Terwilliger: You mean just through observing and dealing with these customers, you sort of picked up the trade. You had no formal training?

**P. Dorf: Absolutely not. I had my training during my visit in other hotels, through deliveries or collecting money.**

R. Terwilliger: Were you born in this country, Mr. Dorf?

**P. Dorf: No, I'm not.**

R. Terwilliger: You were born in Germany?

**P. Dorf: I'm not from Germany at all.**

R. Terwilliger: Switzerland?

**P. Dorf: I'm from Austria Swiss.**

R. Terwilliger: And when did you come to this country then?

**P. Dorf: I came in 1939.**

- R. Terwilliger: I see. Still have that beautiful accent.
- P. Dorf: Oh, I don't think that I will forget that because I'm in Europe twice a year.**
- R. Terwilliger: Do you still have family back there? Relatives?
- P. Dorf: Well I have my home in Europe.**
- R. Terwilliger: You have a home?
- P. Dorf: Yes, I do. Yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: Do you think eventually you'd want to retire there?
- P. Dorf: No, no, no, no, because I want to be here with my son so long [as] I live, you know because [doorbell bell rings] I want to—have nothing filled. My son is absolutely not a businessman.**
- R. Terwilliger: He needs you.
- P. Dorf: He gives everything to the Salvation Army later on.**
- R. Terwilliger: How is the tape doing?
- P. Bruno: It's doing all right. Is somebody here?
- P. Dorf: Excuse me.**
- P. Bruno: I'll shut it off for a minute.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

- R. Terwilliger: Mr. Dorf, how our interest in your establishment here came about, was the fact that I work in the library, and new people would come to town and they'd be so curious about this beautiful building, and if they could go there and have lunch, or could they could go there and have dinner, or if they had out-of-town guests, could they come and stay here? And we knew so little about it to tell them, that we decided that we would try to interest you in sharing the history of the place and plus how it's operated today. And as you say, many famous people and unfamous people have passed through this place and sat at your bar, and some have remained friends over many years, and some have passed on. I wondered if you could share with us a little bit about your feelings about being an innkeeper. Is it a rewarding kind of thing to do? Or do you constantly have to be a diplomat?
- P. Dorf: Well, you should be a diplomat because the customer should be always right. But I personally—I have not the attitude just to say yes and let this case go. I say always what I have on my tongue. And I did that since I'm here, and I be not able to change.**

- R. Terwilliger: And I'm sure that you have found that that sometimes is accepted as good, open honesty. And sometimes it probably has been upsetting to people.
- P. Dorf:** **Not that I know it is upsetting, but what you don't know, you don't hear probably, you know? But in general, you know, that nobody could do something what they do at many other places here. [loud background noise] If a person is not educated or don't know how to behave himself in the place, he has to get out immediately.**
- R. Terwilliger: You have no tolerance for that kind of behavior.
- P. Dorf:** **Absolutely not.**
- R. Terwilliger: Is this typical of European kind of hotel management? Or is this just your personal principles?
- P. Dorf:** **You could say both.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yes, because don't you agree that truly people who have been brought up and raised in Europe have a discipline that a lot of Americans never have had to learn.
- P. Dorf:** **I would go along with that, yeah. But we are lucky, in this place we don't have too many outsiders where we have to reject them [at] the entrance, or something like that. I do not believe if we had more than four or five in the whole time I'm here.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, that's really beautiful. I mean, because you have been here a long time, since nineteen—
- P. Dorf:** **Thirty-nine. I came, I was in the war. And then I was active—I took over the place active 100 percent—you see we owned the place already, before, but—**
- R. Terwilliger: You were part of this corporation then that you said.
- P. Dorf:** **Yeah. And in 1945, I think, I was 100 percent. I took the total management there.**
- R. Terwilliger: Mr. Dorf, what was it like when you first came here?
- P. Dorf:** **When I came here, it was very dead.**
- R. Terwilliger: And was it a running business at that time?
- P. Dorf:** **A running business. A running dead business.**
- R. Terwilliger: A running dead business. And you don't remember the name of the people that—
- P. Dorf:** **Yes, I do. Jameson [phonetic], a brother from the Jameson [phonetic] Candy<sup>2</sup> from Atlantic City. The salt water taffy.**

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<sup>2</sup> He possibly means the James Candy Company from Atlantic City.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, the salt water taffy.

**P. Dorf: Yeah.**

R. Terwilliger: Jameson [phonetic] is the last name?

**P. Dorf: Yeah. Jameson [phonetic] brothers, they owned it.**

R. Terwilliger: Sure!

**P. Dorf: And one of the Jameson [phonetic] was here with his wife, or with his second wife—there were reports—and his son. And they just made a private home for himself out of it.**

R. Terwilliger: I see. Now there's a little building out back, was that ever used for the help to stay in?

**P. Dorf: Years back, now we are talking back from original how it was, when the people came with horse and wagon—the driver of the horse and wagon was staying over there, and the party was staying here.**

R. Terwilliger: I see. Then that was like a livery—is that what they call it—where you store the horse?

**P. Dorf: No, you didn't storage the horse.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I see

**P. Dorf: But the quarter, the headquarter, what you call that when the employee—not employee from the inn—from the people which store it, like you know when you had before, horse and wagon and you was wealthy, you had a driver. And he was staying here. They couldn't stay in the same house where the boss was sleeping.**

R. Terwilliger: And they weren't just black people, these were white people.

**P. Dorf: Oh no, white, absolutely.**

R. Terwilliger: But they were strictly hired hand kind of thing.

**P. Dorf: Correct, right, right. And they were just as happier as you.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I'm sure they had a good time in there.

**P. Dorf: Right, right, right, right.**

R. Terwilliger: Are there any old pictures, back at that time, that were ever left here?

**P. Dorf: There is.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you think that you'd ever possibly allow us to take some pictures of them?



**P. Dorf:** **In the present time, they are all sealed because this is—I feel that has a tremendous value.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, we'd do it right here in front of you and not take them out.

**P. Dorf:** **They are not here.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I see. Oh, you mean you don't want them duplicated either, because they are of such tremendous value.

**P. Dorf:** **They have a good value for me personally.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, I'll tell you your tape has a good value. And the way we present this tape is we have a special piece of equipment where we're going to play the tape and have these corresponding slides. We'll show a picture—a visual aid. When you're talking about the bar, we'll be showing pictures of the bar. And this is why I thought when you talked about how the inn was originally, it would be so much more valuable to have a picture to look at. But you think about it.

**P. Dorf:** **Tom Edison [Thomas Edison] was here too.**

R. Terwilliger: Tom Edison too?!

**P. Dorf:** **And many, many of Tom Edison's helps was here.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, my gracious.

**P. Dorf:** **They had no other chance to go somewhere because his laboratory was in Melo Park. That's how he came here. That used to be the old highway—**

R. Terwilliger: Right. You mean Mr. Edison? The one—he was here?

**P. Dorf:** **Edison. That is correct.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you ever meet Mr. Edison?

**P. Dorf:** **No, I did not. I did meet many of his—**

R. Terwilliger: Laboratory help?

**P. Dorf:** **I wouldn't say the word "help." They were developing just as much as Edison did. It was under Edison.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, he did surround himself with brilliant people.

**P. Dorf:** **You know my personal feelings—but I don't want to have that [on the tape].**

R. Terwilliger: Do you want me to turn it off for a minute?

**P. Dorf:** **Yes. [recording paused]**

- R. Terwilliger: My gracious, a piece—did he give it to you? Was it used as a part of your electrical wiring then?
- P. Dorf: Not of this electric wire. A part—I think there was more than one piece, and whoever was a friend of him, he gave a piece of that—**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, I see. This is more or less a souvenir.
- P. Dorf: More or less, yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah. Some memorabilia kind of thing.
- P. Dorf: Correct. At that time, you didn't have those DX cables, it was straight wires. And two wires you had to put down, you know? A negative and a positive.**
- R. Terwilliger: How many chimneys are on this [inn].
- P. Dorf: Two.**
- R. Terwilliger: Two chimneys. And how many of the bedrooms have fireplaces then?
- P. Dorf: Almost 50 percent.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, what is that? Like ten rooms? Three rooms?
- P. Dorf: Fifty percent, yes. If I, we, offer on—just leave it as it is. We have in downstairs, in the dining rooms we have—in this dining room, a fireplace, in another dining room, a fireplace, and here a fireplace.**
- R. Terwilliger: That's beautiful.
- P. Dorf: And in the hall was a fireplace too, but that is covered up.**
- R. Terwilliger: And before you had—I'm sure at one time there was no electricity in here at all. Is there any remains of what kind of lighting they used?
- P. Dorf: No, there are no remains. But are remains with these old cables—with the original old cables, as I said before—two wires. And you could see this porcelain knobs downstairs [unclear] and et cetera.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yes. I remember those, yeah. Well, unless you can think of anything else that you'd like to share with us, that we've forgotten to ask you. But originally it was a carriage stop, I guess for people traveling—from where? From New York to Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]? Along—what did they call this? The Essex Turnpike?
- P. Dorf: No, the old Lincoln Highway.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, the old Lincoln Highway. And they stopped here—

- P. Dorf:** There was no other place. They had no other choice. I don't know where [George] Washington was sleeping.
- R. Terwilliger: I don't know. I'm surprised that he didn't stop here.
- P. Dorf:** But all of that is all baloney. [laughs]
- R. Terwilliger: Well, he was probably up in Morristown.
- P. Dorf:** Maybe he never was here. Who knows? [laughs]
- R. Terwilliger: Is there anything else that you can think of, Mr. Dorf? I mean this is sort of your history of your inn—if we've neglected any area that you'd like to talk about. What are your plans now? Do you just plan to stay on as long as your health is good?
- P. Dorf:** That's exact what you're saying, and the inn will be not changed. I will not allow it to change any different ways as it was to it is now.
- R. Terwilliger: How many people have offered to buy it from you? [laughs]
- P. Dorf:** In amount of numbers?
- R. Terwilliger: No, I'm sure—all I have ever heard is people will say, "Oh, I would love to buy that place."
- P. Dorf:** Well, this wording and people in real estate—real estate people—I do have weekly between twenty and twenty-five, from all over.
- R. Terwilliger: Really? That's not surprising, because you have a lovely location. The building is in good condition.
- P. Dorf:** It is not in excellent condition, but in better condition as it could be. Let's say this way.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah. And I'm sure they can see it as a—
- P. Dorf:** Extremely clean, it is here. And well-kept up.
- R. Terwilliger: It is. It certainly is, right.
- P. Bruno: Has it been a profitable business?
- P. Dorf:** We never lost money.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, I think unless you can think of something else of interest that you'd like to share with us. Have you always enjoyed your role as an innkeeper?
- P. Dorf:** Enjoyed?
- R. Terwilliger: Yes.

- P. Dorf:** At some time, I got—what should I say, excited too with my [unclear], particular when politicians came. And we want to build in 1947—I think that would be good to let you know. In 1947 or [19]46, we want to build a big hotel on this space here. And a politician came and said—it's easy to say now because they are dead, but I still say it—they ask a certain amount of money to give us the license to do that.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, well you know that's not unusual. [laughs]
- P. Dorf:** No, and we refused to do that because we are not that type.
- R. Terwilliger: Right. Well, would you have to get a variance? I mean, isn't this commercial property?
- P. Dorf:** No, it is not. It is business because it was before they put the ordinance up here. And now they have a residence or something. As I said before, it's just political affair—the whole thing. If it is now or before, it's always the same picture. I give you only one proof here, this part over there was never a real estate agency.
- R. Terwilliger: No, it was a doctor's office
- P. Dorf:** [Dr.] Witmer was there [at 456 Middlesex Avenue], that's right. Over there, a real estate agent bought that house and want to make a real estate office
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, really?
- P. Dorf:** Yeah. And he couldn't get that because he didn't—
- R. Terwilliger: Didn't play footsie. [laughs]
- P. Dorf:** That's the answer. That's the answer, yes. And then how—and next door is the lawyer and all that stuff, one after the other one. And that would be all industrial one day, don't think it will be not.
- R. Terwilliger: I'm sure it would be.
- P. Dorf:** And this town here is politically—if it is now or before, I say that always—don't misunderstand, it is the same thing now as it was thirty years [ago]. If they haven't got the profit that means the individual, they wouldn't do something here.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, being in a business like your own, I mean you're probably more aware of this than the average taxpayer.
- P. Dorf:** I know much, much more than anybody else. Corporate stuff like—
- R. Terwilliger: And of course running a bar. Yeah, even running a bar. You probably heard some loose tongues when they have a few drinks—
- P. Dorf:** I hear more than loose tongues. There are many, many things happen here with big politicians—thousands of dollars were swinging around here.

R. Terwilliger: I find that very interesting, but not surprising.

**P. Dorf:** **Yeah, that's nothing special—from Edison, particular like Westinghouse Plant and oh gosh [mumbling].**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, some time I'm going to come back and make you do a tape and promise not reveal it until after you've passed on.

**P. Dorf:** **You—there was just— [recording paused]**

**That was in 1945, end of [19]45, a sergeant from the Raritan Arsenal came over here. He thinks that that was his home, more or less. And the first week I met him, he introduced himself and the answer said was, well he said, "Glad to meet you, but I tell you wouldn't be longer here than seven days."**

R. Terwilliger: Why?

**P. Dorf:** **That's what he just said because he couldn't fiddle around here.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh. [laughs]

**P. Dorf:** **He still came. Then he was here, it was a month. And the bartender Bill said, "Hey, he's still here?" He said, "No, another month." [laughs] I never forget that.**

R. Terwilliger: So evidently fiddling around in a place didn't make it any more attractive.

**P. Dorf:** **Then he got thrown out of the arsenal, you know. That was the end. He had to go home. He came from the South, I guess.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah, right. That's interesting, yeah. Well, Mr. Dorf we want to thank you for sharing and telling us about the inn. I think it's been a very nice tape and we've enjoyed it.

**P. Dorf:** **You're welcome. It's a pleasure. Thank you.**

R. Terwilliger: Okay, take care. [laughs]

[END OF INTERVIEW]