

## **Sherwood Mundy**

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Interviewer: Ruth Terwilliger  
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Abstract: Sherwood Hoskins Mundy (1907-1988), the son of Charles Herbert Mundy II and Jessie (Abi) Mundy, was a lifelong resident of Metuchen. Mr. Mundy was born at 19 Essex Avenue and later moved to Rose Street with his family. He attended Edgar School and Metuchen High School, graduating in 1925. Mr. Mundy graduated from Rutgers University in 1929 and New Jersey Law School (now Rutgers Law School) in 1932.

Mr. Mundy was admitted to the bar in 1933, and is considered one of the oldest practicing attorneys in Metuchen, where he served as a senior member with the Mundy & Mundy law firm. He was a member of the Middlesex County Bar Association, the First Presbyterian Church, and the Metuchen Rotary Club, where he was a Paul Harris Fellow. He also served in the U.S. Coast Guard, and he was president of the Metuchen Board of Education and chairman of the Metuchen Traffic and Transportation Committee. He married Dorothy Spawn from Perth Amboy in 1937 and they had three children: Nicholas, Jonathan, and Melinda. They settled at 325 Grove Avenue, where Mr. Mundy lived until his death in 1988. Mr. Mundy is buried at the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery.

In this interview, Mr. Mundy discusses his Mundy ancestors, who settled in this area since 1665, and growing up in Metuchen, which included discussions about skating on ponds, shopping in town, the trolley, Daniels Hill, and schooling. Mr. Mundy also talks about the beginnings of local government in Metuchen, Robins Hall, the railroad stations, and the Depression. He concludes the interview by discussing his family life, building a house at 325 Grove Avenue, working on the Metuchen Board of Education, local politics, and his thoughts on living in Metuchen.

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R. Terwilliger: This is Ruth Terwilliger speaking. Today is May 18, 1977 and I am conducting a taping of the life history of a prominent local attorney, Mr. Sherwood Mundy. We are here in Metuchen Public Library at 480 Middlesex Avenue, Metuchen, New Jersey.  
[recording paused]

Good morning, Sherwood, and I would like to thank you again for taking the time from what I know is a very busy schedule to do this taping. You are a man with ancestors who are rich in historical background and we have a great deal of material to cover. So I think we should start right in by my asking you about your earliest ancestors. Where did they come from in Europe?

- S. Mundy:** [tape recorder moving in background] Well, I suppose they would come from England. And the book that was compiled by Ezra Mundy, who was a minister, and of course had the time to do it, said that they arrived first in Virginia and then came up to New Jersey and settled up by the Vineyard Road [in Edison] in 1665.
- R. Terwilliger: My gracious, that really is early! Now I heard you mention he was a minister.
- S. Mundy:** Well, this Ezra Mundy, who compiled this book<sup>1</sup> about a hundred years ago, was a minister. But the first Mundy to have come to this area was named Nicholas Mundy. And the report was that he was a blacksmith and used a stone for an anvil, and he settled up on Vineyard Road. Vineyard Road used to go across Route 27 [Lincoln Highway] and across where the railroad [Pennsylvania Railroad] is now and met New Durham Road. And it was up in that area where he was supposed to have settled.
- R. Terwilliger: And you said he was a farmer also?
- S. Mundy:** Well, yeah. Everybody in those days more or less was a farmer in this area. And there is a record in Trenton that he took up land there about the year 1665.
- R. Terwilliger: Now is Nicholas the son of Ezra?
- S. Mundy:** No, no, no, no. Ezra is way—
- R. Terwilliger: Way back?
- S. Mundy:** No, no, no, since then, since then. No, Nicholas was the first one. Ezra was simply this minister who, as with most ministers, had plenty of time on his hands so he compiled this [genealogy] over a period of years. No, Ezra was not the first one. Nicholas was the first one.
- R. Terwilliger: Nicholas was the first one.
- S. Mundy:** There is a stone<sup>2</sup> up in the Old Burying Ground up there, which I believe he put up commemorating Nicholas Mundy. Nicholas wasn't actually buried there; I don't know where he was buried.
- R. Terwilliger: Now can you tell us anything more about this Nicholas Mundy family? Was it a large family?

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<sup>1</sup> The book was titled *Nicholas Mundy and Descendants Who Settled in New Jersey in 1665*, which was a genealogy compiled by Rev. Ezra F. Mundy in Metuchen, New Jersey in 1907. Ezra F. Mundy (1833-1926), the son of Melancthon Mundy, was a traveling minister of several Presbyterian churches in the New York / New Jersey area. He graduated from Rutgers College in 1852 and the theological seminary in Princeton in 1855.

<sup>2</sup> The memorial stone was placed in 1893 under the oak tree in the Old Colonial Cemetery in Metuchen by Rev. Ezra Mundy, a descendant and an early genealogist of the Mundy family in New Jersey. The inscription says: "In Memory of Nicholas Mundy, The ancestor here of the Mundy family, who settled on land near the Vineyard road, about the year 1670. Erected April 1893 by Ezra F. Mundy."

**S. Mundy:** Oh yes, all families in those days were large. [chuckles] He had a great number of children, was married twice according to the records. And he had a number of children, and they all lived in this area. And my family before me has lived here continuously since 1665.

R. Terwilliger: You truly are a person—

**S. Mundy:** One of the old-timers. [laughs]

R. Terwilliger: —with roots in this area, is what I am trying to say.

**S. Mundy:** Yeah, that's right. Yes.

R. Terwilliger: Now as you just mentioned, most of them were farmers, whether it was their main support of living or whether it was just something that everyone did along with whatever else they did.

**S. Mundy:** Well, I wouldn't know about that. But I suspect that was the case, yes.

R. Terwilliger: When did your family move into the Metuchen area then? Were you raised in Metuchen?

**S. Mundy:** Oh yes, I was born in Metuchen, sure. I've never lived anyplace else. I was born here. My father [Charles Herbert Mundy II] was born here. [clears throat] My father was born in the house on [207] Lake Avenue, which is behind the present Gulf gasoline station [at 1 Essex Avenue]. And that was the homestead and then the house at 19 Essex Avenue, which is now a four-family apartment house, that was their carriage barn. And there was a cow barn and horse barn down behind that. And the carriage barn—well, actually I was born in a barn, along with other important people. [laughter] Because I was born in 19 Essex Avenue, and at that time, it had been converted into a dwelling house. But originally it was a carriage barn, and that's where they kept the carriages.

R. Terwilliger: Well then, you're saying that that whole area from the corner up there on—that's Lake Avenue all the way down Essex—was all part of one farm at one time?

**S. Mundy:** Well, my grandfather [Charles Herbert Mundy I] didn't farm it, no. He just lived there. But the block bounded on the east by Lake Avenue, on the south by Spring Street, on the west by Rose Street, and on the north by Essex Avenue, that whole block was owned by my grandfather and by my uncle, Will Campbell [William T. Campbell], who had married one of my grandfather's daughters.

R. Terwilliger: And this was the area then that you grew up in as a boy? Your father lived with his father then?

**S. Mundy:** No, no, no. I never lived in that house myself. I lived in 19 Essex [Avenue], where I was born. Then I moved down on the lower end of Rose Street in a house that my grandfather owned. Then I moved up on [190] High Street, south of what used to be the Poole Pond. There was a family named Poole<sup>3</sup> that lived there, and

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<sup>3</sup> Hester Martha Hunt Poole was a local writer, poet, cultural critic, artist, and advocate for women's rights, and her husband Cyrus O'Poole was a lawyer in 1889. In 1925, Ms. Poole was one of ten women to be honored by the Susan

**Mrs. [Hester] Poole was a widow when my father was a small boy. And there was a pond back in there, which has since been drained. And my father used to go up there and skate on the pond and Mrs. Poole would pay him to skate so she could watch him. [laughter] See, there wasn't much to do for entertainment in those days.**

R. Terwilliger: Right. But it was customary in those days, if a father or grandfather had some land accumulation, to sell a portion off to a son?

**S. Mundy: Yeah. Well now, my grandfather lived with us at one time in 19 Essex Avenue.**

R. Terwilliger: Were you a close-knit family?

**S. Mundy: Well, reasonably so. I suppose, yes.**

R. Terwilliger: Close-knit with very independent people because you always have impressed me as a person that is reasonably independent, let's say.

**S. Mundy: Yes, reasonably so. Yeah.**

R. Terwilliger: Then can you tell us a little bit maybe about Metuchen as a very young boy. You said it wasn't a town where there was too much to do.

**S. Mundy: Well, when I was a small boy, there were only three thousand people in Metuchen. And I knew an awful lot of those three thousand people. My father always said that when he was small, he knew everyone in Metuchen and that if a stranger should come in town asking for someone, he would be able to tell them where the person lived. But when I was a small boy—you mentioned for entertainment—well, we went skating in the winter. There were a lot of ponds around Metuchen at that time. There was the pond on Lake Avenue, which is properly called Thomas' Pond.**

R. Terwilliger: Not Tommy's Pond.

**S. Mundy: It is not called Tommy's, no. That's right. The proper name is Thomas' Pond and it was called that because it was owned by David G. Thomas, who owned practically that whole block from Spring Street right on up to High Street. He was a great landowner and used to raise chickens up in the house that [Nicholas] Alicino most recently lived in [at 59 Graham Avenue]. That was his mansion house, I guess you'd call it.**

R. Terwilliger: That's the one up on Graham Avenue?

**S. Mundy: That's right. And he had chickens, and my father said he used to go up there and buy eggs from David G. Thomas for ten cents a dozen.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh wow! [laughs] That's an interesting point. How about shopping? Were there enough stores (grocery stores and that) on Main Street that one could—?

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B. Anthony Foundation as one of the most important founders of the National Council of Women in 1888. The Poole family lived at 101 Rose Street, sometimes known as the Isaiah Rolfe House, which was constructed in 1850.

**S. Mundy:** Well, there was John Robinson's Grocery Store, stood at the corner of Main Street, that would be the southwest corner of Main Street and Amboy Avenue, and it was a real old-fashioned grocery store. [coughs] I remember particularly around Good Friday and Easter, he used to have hot cross buns and that was one of the high points of the year for me was to go up there early in the morning and get the hot cross buns from John Robinson's Store. [laughter] And he had one of the old-fashioned coffee mills with the great wheel on it that you would turn the handle and have your freshly ground coffee. And he kept cheese in little enclosure with netting on the top to keep it from drying out. That was a real old-fashioned store. But we had other stores in town. But to really get things, shoes and things like that, you'd have to go to New Brunswick.

R. Terwilliger: To New Brunswick, or to Perth Amboy, probably, I assume.

**S. Mundy:** Well yes, we used to go to Perth Amboy. When we went to Perth Amboy, we'd go on the trolley. And when we'd go to New Brunswick, we'd go on the trolley.

R. Terwilliger: The trolley ran from—?

**S. Mundy:** The trolley ran down Amboy Avenue, down to Fords, and then made a cut in back into Keasbey and then on into [Perth] Amboy. Then it went down South Main Street, on down through Bonhamtown, and over to New Brunswick. And at the time that the trolley company wanted a franchise to put their trolley line through [Metuchen], one of the conditions upon which it was granted was that they run a short line from the corner of Main Street and Amboy Avenue up to the end of Main Street where Clive Street begins. And they had a yellow trolley car, which we called the "Yellow Hornet," and a motorman by the name of Gene O'Hara, who used to run this trolley. So you could ride from the corner of Main and Amboy up to the end of Main Street by Clive for a nickel. Well, one of the other advantages was that Gene would shop for the families that lived up at the end of Main Street. [laughter] And it was not at all unusual to see the trolley stop in front of Ben<sup>4</sup> Wittnebert's Meat Market, which is about where a portion of Morris Stores is now. And Gene would go in and say, "Grind up a pound of hamburg for me." And then he'd go on up to the corner of Main and Amboy, and on the way back, he'd pick up the hamburg and deliver it to Mrs. Kelly or whoever it was down at the end of Main Street.

R. Terwilliger: Isn't that interesting? [laughs]

**S. Mundy:** That trolley car was—we had a lot of fun with that. You remember, of course, that there's quite a hill going up towards the Post Office [building at 360 Main Street] underneath the railroad bridge there. And we used to put axle grease on the rails and the trolley get halfway up and slide back. [laughter] That was one of our pleasures in those days.

But you were speaking about—or I was speaking about skating. There was a pond on Woodbridge Avenue down in the Twentieth Century Homes development there, around Upland Avenue and so on. That used to be the Spear estate and there was Spear's Pond there. Then there was a pond out the far end of Woodbridge Avenue in what is now Edison Township. And that was called

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<sup>4</sup> His first name was Bernard Wittnebert, and he owned a meat store at 415 Main Street.

**Kardos Pond [phonetic]. Then there was a pond way out on the end of Oakland Avenue, which is again Edison Township. We skated there. I remember going out there one time in the winter on my bicycle and oh, it was so cold, my feet just about froze off.**

R. Terwilliger: I wanted to say to you, while I'm just thinking of it, I've asked other people that I've done tapings with and I am sort of compiling this information. Do you feel winters were more severe as a boy than we have—colder, more snow, or whatever?

**S. Mundy: Well, it seemed to me that there was a lot more snow. I don't know, maybe it was because I was small. But I swear they were colder and a lot more snow because—**

R. Terwilliger: This time you're talking about, that you started to talk about, was so cold?

**S. Mundy: Yes, that's right. Well, we used to have a toboggan run up on Daniels Hill [at Hillside Avenue] and it takes a lot of snow to have a toboggan run. And we'd go up there with pails of water and throw the water on and have it freeze. It would freeze immediately (it was so cold) in order to make the toboggan run slipperier.**

R. Terwilliger: Now which way did this run? Down toward Grove [Avenue]?

**S. Mundy: Yeah, it ran down towards Grove. That's right. Oh, that was a lot of fun up there on that toboggan run. But, as I say, it required a lot of snow for that. Well, I remember one time when I was going to school up at the Edgar School [at 49 Brunswick Avenue], I was in the first class when that school was built [in 1917]. And it was built—well, it was 1917 when the first class—1917-1918, I'm not certain. But anyhow, I was the first class there and I remember getting lost—no, fourth grade, I was in the fourth grade at that time and I remember practically getting lost in the snowdrifts going up there. My father had to come, and it was up where the Reformed Church is now [at 150 Lake Avenue], and my father had to come looking for me. Now we don't have snow that big today.**

R. Terwilliger: No, no. Well, you know according to the information that I have gathered from different people that have spent childhoods here in Metuchen, they have all said the same thing. And again, sort of protecting themselves with the fact that whether it was because I was a child, it seemed more severe. But Mr. [Charles] Carman spoke of the same thing, of really almost not being able to make it home at times because the snow was so deep.

**S. Mundy: Yeah, I think there was a lot more snow. And it would stay on the ground longer too. Well, even though it was a little town then, we had services that we don't have now. I can see Ezra Mundy, who was a remote relation of mine, standing on the back of a wooden snow plow being pulled by a horse, plowing the sidewalks on Middlesex Avenue.**

R. Terwilliger: My gosh!

**S. Mundy: Well, it would be about the corner, right near where Paul Fenton lives now [at 368 Middlesex Avenue]. I can see Ezra Mundy standing there; he had a big mustache, big handlebar mustache, and I can see him standing behind this horse**

**plowing the sidewalks off. Well, the borough doesn't plow off the sidewalks for anybody now. [laughter]**

R. Terwilliger: Now it's your responsibility as a taxpayer.

**S. Mundy: That's right. So the town was better in some ways then.**

R. Terwilliger: What about the town and the government? Did they have the mayor form of mayor council?

**S. Mundy: Yeah. Well, we had a mayor and council. As you remember, Metuchen was split off from Edison Township in 1900 and Mr. [William R.] Thornall was the first mayor. That's Worthy Thornall's [Jay Worthington Thornall's] grandfather. I can remember when the mayor and council used to meet in a back room of the building that now houses Metuchen Hardware [at 401 Main Street]. There used to be a center hall there, center door, and there were two floors above and on the right-hand side of the center door was Smith's Barber Shop. Funny, I can't remember his name<sup>5</sup> for the moment, but he had a barber shop there. And in back of that, in the [Metuchen] Hardware building, was the room for the mayor and council, and they used to hold court in there too.**

R. Terwilliger: That's the building known as Robins Hall.

**S. Mundy: Robins Hall, that's right. And Nate Robins owned the building and built it. Matter of fact, it was built before the Civil War.**

R. Terwilliger: Hmm, that's an old building!

**S. Mundy: That's a very old building. I've got a picture of it down in the office with a whole lot of men and old-fashioned fellows standing in front of it.**

R. Terwilliger: And I also understand that that was used as a recreational hall too?

**S. Mundy: Yes, my father used to play a piccolo for dances up there.**

R. Terwilliger: On the second floor?

**S. Mundy: Well, it was either second or third, I don't know which. But they used to have a great, big chandelier—it may still be there for all I know—because they had this enormous chandelier there and they had oil lamps, of course, to light it. And my father used to play a piccolo for dances. I can't imagine anybody dancing to a piccolo, but they did. [laughs]**

R. Terwilliger: Now did you ever attend any social affairs or was that all since what's changed?

**S. Mundy: No, no. When I was young boy, they had a pocketbook manufacturing place there; they manufactured pocketbooks.**

R. Terwilliger: For goodness sakes! That has seen a lot of changes over the years.

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<sup>5</sup> The barber's name was Frank B. Smith.

- S. Mundy:**           **Yeah, a lot of changes. That's right.**
- R. Terwilliger:       I wanted to ask you about—you went to Edgar School as grade school?
- S. Mundy:**           **No, I started out in the Franklin School [at 596 Middlesex Avenue] for the first three years. [coughs] And then from the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth [grades], I went to the Edgar School.**
- R. Terwilliger:       That went up to eighth grade then?
- S. Mundy:**           **Yeah, yep, and high school. The last four years of high school was down to the Franklin School again.**
- R. Terwilliger:       And you went to high school in Metuchen High School? Because a good number of young men at that time that I've interviewed went to Rutgers Prep [School in Franklin Township].
- S. Mundy:**           **Yeah, I know. A lot of fellows did.**
- R. Terwilliger:       A private school. I think Paul Fenton was one.
- S. Mundy:**           **I couldn't afford that; I couldn't afford that. No, we went to high school.**
- R. Terwilliger:       So you're actually the first one that I can ask about Metuchen High School as a young man. Can you name some of your contemporaries or teachers?
- S. Mundy:**           **Well, sure.**
- R. Terwilliger:       Who are some of the guys you went to school with? Are any of them still around in Metuchen?
- S. Mundy:**           **Well, I went to school with Jim Oliver [James Oliver]; he died recently. And his young son, Jim, is a dentist somewhere in the area here. Bobby Wilmont [Robert Willmont] was in class with me; Ethel Breen (her name is Liseno now) and Loyola Breen, her sister; Tom Dover [Thomas Dover] was in my class. Earl Potter used to live up on [379] Middlesex Avenue. I think we had fourteen, if I remember, in our graduating class.**
- R. Terwilliger:       My gracious, fourteen?
- S. Mundy:**           **Yeah, there weren't many. There weren't many then.**
- R. Terwilliger:       And were you taught by one person also [unclear] or did you change classes?
- S. Mundy:**           **No, we changed classes. We had different teachers. I remember we had an English teacher by the name of Bump, B-u-m-p. And we had Elmo Spoerl for math. And it took me months to visualize a plane surface in geometry. All I could see was four lines on the blackboard and I couldn't visualize a plane surface, although he was supposed to be an excellent math teacher.**



R. Terwilliger: Well, almost your career proves your kind of creative thinking. That's a scientific mind. To me, you have more of a mind that deals more in the arts, communicative arts, the lawyer you are.

I think I'm going to turn the tape over, Sherwood ... [recording paused]

I've sort of skipped over one area that is of truly the utmost interest to me and that's your ancestors that were involved in the Revolutionary War in this period. Could you tell us the famous story in Metuchen is the skirmish that was supposed to be run by a gang called the Rangers? In any way, were the Mundys involved in this skirmish?

**S. Mundy: If so, I don't know about it. As a matter of fact, I've never heard of this so-called skirmish before. There is a plaque up in the Post Office now, giving the names of four Mundys<sup>6</sup> who were supposed to have been involved in the Revolution in one way or another. I understood that the extent of involvement, as respect to one of them, was that he sold hay to some of the horses that were used. [laughter] Now if you call that participating in the Revolution, I suppose he did. But I just don't know about it. I understand that there were Mundys in my background who did participate in the Revolution, and my sister became a member of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] as a result of it. But to be quite honest about it, it has never concerned me too much. It's interesting to know that it might have been or was, but I'm more concerned with the future and the present than I am with the past. [laughs] I don't take a great deal of credit for what my ancestors might have done. I am proud of the fact that I do have roots going back to 1665, but remember there were an awful lot of horse thieves in those days in your ancestry that you conveniently forget about.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, they might have even been Tories and you didn't know about. [laughs]

**S. Mundy: That's right, that's right. So that I don't concentrate too much on my ancestors as to what they did. The fact that they were here, of course is something. But as far as this Revolutionary business, I just don't know.**

R. Terwilliger: You really have never deeply researched it then as far as their exact involvement?

**S. Mundy: No, I haven't, because it has never interested me too much and I've had—**

R. Terwilliger: Has it been researched because of the plaque up in the cemetery to—?

**S. Mundy: Somebody has done it, but I don't know who.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah, it must have been because I think in order to get that kind of a commemoration awarded to a person, there has to be some very concrete—

**S. Mundy: Unquestionably there is. But, as I say, I'm not familiar with it.**

R. Terwilliger: But you have never involved yourself in it all. And maybe you're right, you're a man of vision to the future, not the past. [laughs]

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<sup>6</sup> The Liberty Plaque in the Metuchen Post Office was erected "to honor the memory of the valiant citizens of this community who served in the American Forces that won our liberty in the War of Independence 1775-1781." The Mundy names on plaque are Henry Mundy, Samuel Mundy, and Nicholas Mundy.

So then we'll jump back to, you did go to Metuchen High, you graduated from Metuchen High, and went to college some days?

**S. Mundy:** **Then I went to Rutgers [University in New Brunswick], yes. And I graduated from Rutgers [in 1929]. And after that, I went to what was then called New Jersey Law School in Newark. It has since become a unit of Rutgers University. They had taken it over and it's now called Rutgers Law School. But at the time I graduated [in 1932], it was called New Jersey Law School and was run by a man by the name of [Charles] Mason. It was supposedly a profit-making operation. As you probably know, it is very, very difficult to get into law school today. You have to take and pass very, very difficult examinations before they will even admit you. Now I started law school in 1929 at the time of the Depression. So, when I applied for admission, I had to answer only one question. And the question was "Where is the money?"**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, yes. [laughs]

**S. Mundy:** **If you had the money, you were able to get in.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah. What did it cost to go to law school? What kind of money were they talking about?

**S. Mundy:** **It's strange, but I just don't remember. It did not cost a great deal in those days.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah, yeah. I would be very curious to know that.

**S. Mundy:** **I just don't know, and I have no way of finding out.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, was this a struggle for your family then? Can you tell me that?

**S. Mundy:** **Well, they didn't have any more money than they needed, but—**

R. Terwilliger: You had brothers and sisters too?

**S. Mundy:** **I had one sister [Evangeline (Mundy) Galas].**

R. Terwilliger: One sister, older or younger?

**S. Mundy:** **No, she's six years younger than I am.**

R. Terwilliger: Six years younger. So they probably—they really maybe a little better prepared for you to go to college, I mean to law school, they had planned on this?

**S. Mundy:** **Oh yes, yes, yes, yes.**

R. Terwilliger: What made you decide on a law career, was your father—?

**S. Mundy:** **No, my grandfather was a lawyer.**

R. Terwilliger: What was his name now?

**S. Mundy:** Charles H. Mundy.

R. Terwilliger: Charles H. Mundy.

**S. Mundy:** And my father was also Charles H. Mundy.

R. Terwilliger: Did he practice in Metuchen? Charles?

**S. Mundy:** My grandfather? No. His office was in New York City. I remember he had an office in the [New York] Tribune Building downtown. He used to take me in occasionally. And I'll tell you an interesting story about that.

R. Terwilliger: Let me check the tape, Sherwood, before you do that. I don't want it to run out in the middle of your interesting story. [recording paused]

Okay, tell me your interesting story.

**S. Mundy:** At one time, there were four railroad stations in Metuchen on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

R. Terwilliger: Four?

**S. Mundy:** Four. One was up at what we used to call High Bridge. That has since been taken down. It was east of the present bridge over the railroad at Bridge Street, but it was east of that and ran into Prospect Street. We used to call that the High Bridge, and there was a railroad station there at one time. Then there was another railroad station at Main Street where the present one is. And there was one down near Grove Avenue, what they call Robinvale [Station]. That's three. Now the railroad station at Main Street burned down and the railroad rebuilt a station, which was the fourth station, on the railroad bank about where the American Legion home is now [at Holly Street]. But it was built, of course, on the railroad bank. As a result of the station being there, some businesses developed in the area. The brick building at the corner of Amboy and Lake [Avenue] where the Docs Real Estate Agency is now, that was built by a man by the name of Dawson<sup>7</sup> and he had a store there. And across the street, there was a feed store with a high platform so wagons could back up and load the feed without having to carry it. [laughter] There was a hotel about where the American Legion Home is now. And there was Flaherty's Livery Station, Stable rather, [at 70 Pearl Street] where Cheche has his rigging place.

R. Terwilliger: So that was almost like the little hub developing there?

**S. Mundy:** That was a little hub of business. Well, of course, that drew business away from Main Street so that the merchants on Main Street were always agitating for the return of the station to the Main Street location. Now my grandfather, as I say, lived up on Lake Avenue in back of what's now the Gulf gas station there, and he used to walk to the station to go to New York City to practice. It was very difficult for him to get a liveryman to take him in his carriage because he thought he knew

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<sup>7</sup> The Dawson Building was located at 257 Lake Avenue and was occupied in the early 1920s by the Belden Manufacturing Company.

more than the man driving the horse did and would issue instructions as to how he should be driven. [laughter] And they didn't like it, so they wouldn't come and get him. So he would have to walk. Well, it was a little longer for him to walk to the Metuchen location than it was to the Lake Avenue location, station. So one day the word got around—oh, the railroad had just about decided that it was going to demolish the Lake Avenue Station and rebuild up at Main Street where the fire had been. And one day word got around that my grandfather had gone to Trenton to get an injunction to restrain the railroad from removing the station from Lake Avenue. Well, the railroad got a great big switch engine down and put an enormous chain around the railroad station building itself and pulled it down. The idea being that if the building was already demolished, the injunction, of course, would be ineffectual. Well, the truth of the matter was, my grandfather hadn't gone to Trenton ... [recording ends]

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

- S. Mundy:** [recording begins mid-sentence] ... three years of law school, that's right. Then I had to serve a year in a lawyer's office, a clerkship. They've abolished that since then, which was a good idea.
- R. Terwilliger: Although my son is at Antioch down in Washington DC [District of Columbia], and it's a clinical law school where you go for so long and then you go out and sort of practice what you've learned.
- S. Mundy:** Well, that's a good idea. But the clerkships around here I felt were very unproductive.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah. And where did you do your clerkship then?
- S. Mundy:** I served my clerkship with Judge [Edward W.] Hicks in New Brunswick.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yes. That's an old name in the area.
- S. Mundy:** That's an old firm, yeah.
- R. Terwilliger: Uh-huh. And what kind of cases did you try then?
- S. Mundy:** Oh, I didn't try any cases.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, you did most of it as a clerk. Research then?
- S. Mundy:** Research stuff. That's right.
- R. Terwilliger: All right. Is there any interesting story you can tell us about anything you were involved in researching? Did they have murders back then?
- S. Mundy:** Well, Doug Hicks [Douglas Mallory Hicks], who was Judge Hicks' son, he was the county prosecutor at the time.

R. Terwilliger: This was more criminal law then?

**S. Mundy: It was more criminal, yeah. He handled, of course, all the criminal stuff and I used to sit in on the trials of the different matters that he was handling. And that was interesting, but I felt my clerkship was very unproductive, I hate to say. As a matter of fact, when I started to practice, it was painful because I knew so little of the practical side of practicing law. When a person graduates from law school, he knows more theoretical law than he'll ever know again. But it's the practical end of it that's important. And I got very little practical experience, so that it was painful for me because started in [19]33, which was the bottom of the Depression.**

R. Terwilliger: Now you were not married at this time?

**S. Mundy: No, I didn't get married until 1937.**

R. Terwilliger: Nineteen-hundred-thirty-seven. And did you open your office here in Metuchen?

**S. Mundy: Yes, yes. Harry Wemett was the attorney for the old National Bank, or it was then called The Metuchen National Bank. And it went bad in 1933, along with an awful lot of other banks, and it was reorganized and called Metuchen National Bank; the word "The" was left off. And he, as part of his fee, I suppose, got the second floor of the bank for his offices [at 406 Main Street]. And he practiced mainly in New York so that in order to have his office covered in Metuchen, he gave me an office rent-free.**

R. Terwilliger: Just to sort of keep watch on the shop? [laughs]

**S. Mundy: Just to be able to keep watch on—that's right. So that's how I started in [19]33. I couldn't have started any other way because I just didn't have any money.**

R. Terwilliger: Right. You know we keep skipping around the Depression then, but you know it was a very, very serious portion of our history.

**S. Mundy: That's right.**

R. Terwilliger: And especially as you're saying, you were a young man starting out, you went through law school during these years. Do you have any reflections on—or can you tell us anything about what was it like? Were there a lot of families in Metuchen that lost homes and businesses?

**S. Mundy: Oh sure, sure. An awful lot of people lost their properties, business establishments on Main Street. One fellow lost a big building—I won't mention the name of it—because he couldn't pay a mortgage of \$7,000, only \$7,000 for a big building here on Main Street. Money just wasn't available. A house that is now selling for \$77,000 was bought during the Depression by a man who did have some money for \$6,000. Things were very, very tough. The teachers in town were getting about \$1,200 a year and they had to take a 10 percent cut. So they were working for \$1,080 a year. They want that much increase per year now. [laughter] And that's what they worked for all year.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, I recall as a youngster, we came here in about 1939, and it still wasn't over then. There was an awful lot of land up for taxes. And I remember my dad bought the old Ten Eyck house on [108] Middlesex Avenue. And it was through the Metuchen Building and Loan [Association], I think it was called even then. And they wanted to throw in a little, yellow-framed building that was over by the railroad for a \$1,000 or something. And just to show the difference in the value of money, my father could never even consider taking on that extra \$1,000 after buying this large home. And so many times, or for years afterwards, he really was so sorry he didn't have more confidence in himself because he could have invested in that plus all the land behind the house they wanted to give him for dirt-cheap at the time. [laughs]

**S. Mundy: Well, when I was in the National Bank building there, as I mentioned, this was 1936, I guess, the bank had taken back on foreclosure of a mortgage, seventeen acres lying west of Grove Avenue in Edison Township where Twin Oaks Drive is now, backed up to the golf course [Metuchen Golf and Country Club]. It was a magnificent piece of property. It had a farmhouse on it, which was then called the old Cook farmhouse, and they took it back and they offered to sell it to me for \$7,000 and would give me the full \$7,000 mortgage. Can you imagine it?**

R. Terwilliger: And you passed that up?

**S. Mundy: I passed it up. One reason was I wanted to live in Metuchen. Maybe if it had been Metuchen there, I would have done it. But I wanted to live in Metuchen. But even so, think of being able to get that for \$7000.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I know it was incredible.

**S. Mundy: Money was almost non-existent then.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah, this is it. And you know my dad had struggled and saved for years to be able to have the down payment for this house, and fortunately he didn't lose that money through the Depression. He always wanted to come from Metuchen; we lived in Elizabeth. But this isn't my life history, but it was just the interesting thing I remember the—I'm trying to remember the name of the real estate man that came to talk to my father. Or maybe he wasn't even in real estate; I remember he lived in that English Tudor house [at 58 Eggert Avenue].

**S. Mundy: [Robert] Fullerton.**

R. Terwilliger: Right, Mr. Fullerton. And he tried so hard to talk my father into having the confidence in himself to take on this extra. He said, "You know you'll certainly get your return." But these are the things we can't do when you have four hungry little mouths looking at you and a whole future ahead of you. But he didn't make a mistake, I'm sure anyway.

So how long did it take before business started to pick up?

**S. Mundy: Well, I would say 1937 before I felt that I had enough money to get married.**

R. Terwilliger: Now that was a serious consideration?

- S. Mundy:** That's right. And of course, one of the things that made it possible was that my wife [Dorothy (Spawn) Mundy] was working as a schoolteacher. So with the two incomes, we were able to do it. But alone, I don't know whether I've been able to do it. But at that time, we got married, we—
- R. Terwilliger: Was she a local girl too?
- S. Mundy:** No, she came—originally, she was from Perth Amboy. But I didn't know her when she lived in Perth Amboy. But I met her up at a summer hotel in Milford, Pennsylvania on the Delaware River. [clears throat] I had gone there as a bellman during the summer vacation of 1928. What time is it getting to be?
- R. Terwilliger: It's eleven-twenty [a.m.].
- S. Mundy:** And I had gone there to be a bellman. I went up with Bill Zahn [William Zahn] from Metuchen and she was up there as a waitress. She was up there with Grace Humphreys from Metuchen and Roxanna Weeks, and Evelyn Leis [phonetic] from Perth Amboy and oh, a number of girls. They would go up there and vacation, college vacation in the summer, and be a waitress in the summer hotel. And I met her up there and we subsequently married.
- R. Terwilliger: Um-hm. What year was it when you were married?
- S. Mundy:** We were married in [19]37, 1937.
- R. Terwilliger: Nineteen-hundred-thirty-seven and she was teaching in—?
- S. Mundy:** No, she was teaching in Irvington at the time because she had lived in Newark and she got a job in Irvington.
- R. Terwilliger: And what was her maiden name?
- S. Mundy:** Spawn, S-p-a-w-n. An unusual name.
- R. Terwilliger: And her first name?
- S. Mundy:** Dorothy.
- R. Terwilliger: Dorothy Spawn.
- S. Mundy:** Dorothy Spawn. And we were able to build our house on [325] Grove Avenue where we moved in when we were married. And we've lived ever since. We've never lived anywhere else.
- R. Terwilliger: Give me the address of that.
- S. Mundy:** Three-hundred-twenty-five.
- R. Terwilliger: Three-hundred-twenty-five Grove Avenue. It's a beautiful Cape Cod frame house. I've always liked it.

- S. Mundy:** **That's right, that's right. Well, we have never lived any place but that.**
- R. Terwilliger: That's wonderful. You say that you're a man with vision toward the future, but I get a very strong feeling that roots are terribly important to you.
- S. Mundy:** **No question about it. I like to be in a rut. I suppose it's a feeling of security.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I feel very much that way myself. I've never had any desire to leave Metuchen, even as much as it's changed.
- S. Mundy:** **I told my wife the only way they're going to get me out of that house is to carry me out feet first.**
- R. Terwilliger: Feet first! [laughs] I agree. I remember as a girl now, Sherwood, and I'm being presumptuous in calling you Sherwood. Almost I think as you get older, we grow closer.
- S. Mundy:** **No, there's no reason why—listen, why should you be different? Almost everybody in Metuchen calls me Sherwood.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, it's not out of disrespect.
- S. Mundy:** **No, I know. Because they feel they know me, and I like that.**
- R. Terwilliger: Right, yes. But you probably don't remember as a youngster, I sat [babysat] with your kids. It was probably Nick [Nicholas Mundy, eldest son].
- S. Mundy:** **Yes, yes, yes, yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: And your daughter, you have an older daughter [Melinda (Mundy) Blejwas]. I was at the time probably no more than about ten, but I do remember a sandbox in the backyard and watching her for Mrs. Mundy while she did a few chores. I also remember a piece of property across the street from your house where every year you put in a beautiful garden.
- S. Mundy:** **That's right. Well, we had a garden there. When Harry Wemett, or when his wife owned the property, we had a garden there and then later they decided that they were going to sell it off for building lots. So we bought a piece seventy-five feet front and 175 feet deep, and I think it cost us \$1,350 or something. And maybe it cost us another \$400 or \$500 for sidewalks and sewer. But it was just before Nick [son] built his house on it, I refused an offer of \$25,000 for that lot. So I should have bought a half a dozen of them from Harry at the time.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, that's the thing that none of us really realize.
- S. Mundy:** **But you don't foresee the increase in values. But I had a beautiful vegetable garden there. And as a matter of fact, I still have a garden. I now have a piece over at Wood Brook Farms [in Edison] that I garden.**
- R. Terwilliger: That you garden? Oh, that's wonderful.



- S. Mundy:** I know the farm manager over there and he allows me to use it. He plows it for me and discs it and harrows it, and all I have to do is plant it and cultivate it.
- R. Terwilliger: Is this something you really enjoy?
- S. Mundy:** Oh yes, sure. That's why my wife and I rarely go away in the summertime, because if we do, we have to more or less abandon the garden because the garden requires care. But I enjoy the garden and I enjoy the fresh vegetables. So if we were to go away in the summer—we did it a couple times when we had a garden across the street—we came back, it was just a mass of weeds. So now we go at other times during the year.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, I'm a girl also who has to put seeds in the ground in the spring and watch them grow. There's just something of that kind of seasons that are very important to me. It wouldn't be spring without planting something. And I think that's what I've always most admired in you is that you are a man of strong principles and yet there is that other side of you that—I don't want to call it soft, but is—sensitive is a better word, to life and growing things. And I want people to know that you are not all the feisty—  
[laughs]
- S. Mundy:** Well, I say, it's nice of you to say that you consider me a man of strong principles. A lot of people call me a crank because I don't hesitate to speak out about the things that I think are wrong in town and that goes against the grain with many people. They perhaps feel the way I do, but they don't say things.
- R. Terwilliger: I was just going to say that. Most people don't have the courage of their convictions. You know they hide behind them or skirt the issue, but I admire someone who—and I don't think you've ever done it in poor taste—
- S. Mundy:** Well, I don't know about that, but I don't hesitate. Now you see, I'm somewhat like Ed Kelly who used to live in town here. I met him at the corner of Hillside Avenue and Main Street one time, and he was talking about some fellow who was going to run for council. And Ed was an old-timer in town, very old, and he said, [mimicking loud voice] "Who does he think he is, trying to tell us how to run the town. He's only lived here twenty years?"
- R. Terwilliger: [laughs] Well that's the way it was though. I remember when we first came to Metuchen that—of course, then we knew immediately it was a Republican town and if you're anything but that, you kept kind of quiet and just mind your own business. And also that, which is true in many small towns with strong roots, unless you've lived here some fifty years or something, you don't say very much.
- S. Mundy:** That's right.
- R. Terwilliger: And I've seen it up when we've traveled through New England and even down in South Jersey in some of those little clam towns down there, they have the same kind of feeling.
- S. Mundy:** Well, I object very much to a person coming into town and living here a few years and then trying to tell you how to run the place.

R. Terwilliger: Right. Well, especially if you've spent time and effort yourself in caring what's happening. You were on the [Metuchen] Board of Education now, which is something we haven't mentioned.

**S. Mundy: I was on the Board of Education for eleven years.**

R. Terwilliger: Eleven years.

**S. Mundy: I was president for seven of those eleven years.**

R. Terwilliger: I was going to ask you—I was sure you were president also. So it's this kind of commitment to a town that newcomers don't realize.

**S. Mundy: Yeah, I did an awful lot of work on the Board of Education, I must say, with all modesty. And I notice on the bulletin board in the Borough Hall that they have a conference meeting every single week. Every Tuesday night, they have a conference meeting, and of course, their regular monthly meeting. We didn't have conference meetings every Tuesday night! Occasionally we would have a conference meeting, but we relied upon our superintendent or our supervising principal to run the school system!**

R. Terwilliger: Right.

**S. Mundy: And we relied upon his advice and counsel; we established general policy and relied upon him to carry it out. I cannot see what they can possibly do that requires a conference meeting every Tuesday night! I wouldn't submit to that amount of time and work.**

R. Terwilliger: I think that's why it's so terribly hard to attract people to these positions anymore because it's such a serious commitment on your private life.

**S. Mundy: Of course, it is. Now, as I say, I was president for seven years and perhaps it isn't the proper thing to say, but I really ran the Board of Education with a firm hand. It wasn't that I imposed my will upon people, but we had rules that were followed. We had very few people attend. Anyone who attended could speak his peace, but once he said it, that was it! He couldn't repeat it a half a dozen times and get up time after time saying the same thing over because, in my opinion, very few things are improved by repetition.**

**But Mrs. Flood, I remember used to live up here on [367] Middlesex Avenue, she came down one time and got up and said something. And I said, "Thank you Mrs. Flood, we'll consider it." And a few minutes later, she got up and started to say the same thing again. I said, "Mrs. Flood, have you something new that you want to say to us?" "No, I want to say—" I said, "Well, we've heard you and we don't intend to listen again. Sit down, Mrs. Flood." Well, she was very much disturbed that I talked to her that way. And I objected very strongly to some of the actions of the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] and I told them at the time. [chuckles] We had a PTA woman there, and I said, "Do you know what would be the greatest service that you could render to the Borough of Metuchen, the PTA?" And she said, "No." I said, "Dissolve." [laughter] Well, of course that infuriated her, and it made everyone with the PTA mad at me. But it was true**

**that I felt that whatever it was they were talking about was something that didn't concern the PTA and they were taking up our time. But you see those were the things that I would do that would make people mad at me.**

R. Terwilliger: That sort of built this reputation that you have?

**S. Mundy: Yes. I suppose so.**

R. Terwilliger: But that's leadership.

**S. Mundy: I felt so, yes!**

R. Terwilliger: That's leadership. I mean we have too many of these easy-going, soft-soaping open kind of things and nothing is accomplished. And it requires conference meetings every week.

**S. Mundy: I can't see the conference—well, let's forget about the Board of Education.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah. Well, you did put a good deal of time.

**S. Mundy: I put in eleven years and I felt that was sufficient.**

R. Terwilliger: And was this while your children were in the school system then? Is that correct?

**S. Mundy: I was on the board from 1937 to 1948. And no, my children were not in school system.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh no, you were a young man yet.

**S. Mundy: Yup, 1937 to 1948. And Nicholas was born in 1943, so he would have [been] just starting kindergarten and I quit because I didn't—quite honest about it, I didn't want to have any feeling that my children were obtaining a preference because of the fact that I was on the Board of Education. And I think that's so often the case.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, very much so.

**S. Mundy: No, I don't approve of it.**

R. Terwilliger: If it isn't so, you're led to believe it's so.

**S. Mundy: That's right, people's suspicions.**

R. Terwilliger: But then do you feel maybe this exposure on the Board of Education and—were you ever involved politically in town?

**S. Mundy: Oh, at one time, I was—**

R. Terwilliger: Did you do things to make your business grow? That's what I'm trying to—did you feel it was important to make contacts?

**S. Mundy:** I thought that on the Board of Education would be exposure, yes. That's one thing. And whether it helped me or not, I really don't know. I was, oh, at one time when the young Republicans first started, I was a president of the local Young Republican Club.

R. Terwilliger: You never ran then for political office?

**S. Mundy:** I never ran for political office, no, no.

R. Terwilliger: Was because this is not an interest area of yours? Did you feel it was better just to—?

**S. Mundy:** Well, I felt that at that time, when I might have been interested, I was on the Board of Education and I didn't want to attempt to do two things, even if I could have.

R. Terwilliger: Right, yeah. But business started to grow then, you're now married and you've built a house. And who built your house, by the way?

**S. Mundy:** A man by the name of Arthur Koster, he used to live up on [1] Ely Court, up off of High Street, and he built it. And at that time, you could get any kind of lumber you wanted. I remember he got a whole load of lumber from Royal Millwork [& Building Supply Company] and they dumped it in the front yard. And he looked at it, he said, "I don't like it. Take it back." They said, "Yes, Mr. Koster," and they piled it all up and took it back. Today, if you didn't like the looks of it, you'd be so glad to be able to get it that you'd keep quiet.

R. Terwilliger: Well, it must have been quite a comparison to when you built your house and Nicholas building his house across the way, with green lumber.

**S. Mundy:** Oh yes, no question, no question. That's right, no question about it.

R. Terwilliger: Yeah. Now was this a house plan you and your wife had?

**S. Mundy:** Yeah, well, we had got it. I think the basic plan we got from *Better Homes and Gardens*. And then we had somebody draw up the—we had to have a local architect, seal of a local architect, so I forget who it was we had. [door slamming] But anyhow, when we built it, we finished off only the first floor because that's all we could afford.

R. Terwilliger: And what's that consist of? Kitchen?

**S. Mundy:** It had a kitchen; it had a large living room. It had a living room, fourteen by twenty-six [feet], which is a good, big room. And then it had a full bath, and a large kitchen, and a bedroom, and then the front entrance hall. And then later, when the children came along, we finished off the second floor and put a full bath there and two bedrooms there. And then after that, we put an addition on the back for a large dining room [and] a large bedroom above that. So we now have [counting] one, two, three bedrooms on the third floor and two full baths. We have a den on the first floor, dining room, living room—

R. Terwilliger: So it was a very good basic house to—it could grow.

- S. Mundy:** It was a house that could be expanded. That's right, it could grow.
- R. Terwilliger: I've always liked it. It's an attractive traditional Cape Cod.
- S. Mundy:** That's what I liked about it.
- R. Terwilliger: Yes. [coughs] So you had three children, am I correct?
- S. Mundy:** Three, yes. First, we had Nicholas, he was born in [19]43. And then in [19]45 we had Jonathan and Melinda.
- R. Terwilliger: They were twins.
- S. Mundy:** Well, I suppose technically you can't call them twins because twins are generally of the same sex.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh? Okay.
- S. Mundy:** And here was one of each: one boy and one girl. So that while they were born at the same time, and people sometimes refer to them as twins, technically I don't think they are considered twins.
- R. Terwilliger: I never thought about that before. Medically, they do say medically that's true?
- S. Mundy:** Medically, I think they call them a litter breed. I don't know why. Litter breed.
- R. Terwilliger: [laughs] But anyway, you did get two at once. [laughs]
- S. Mundy:** Two at once. We had a bargain, yup.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah. And Nicholas is a practicing attorney in your office. And Jonathan also?
- S. Mundy:** That's right. Jonathan the same thing, yes. I feel very proud of that because many of my friends who are lawyers have sons who wouldn't have any part of the practice.
- R. Terwilliger: Right. Well, I think you probably were a father of great influence.
- S. Mundy:** Well, I didn't attempt to pressure them. But at least I let them know the values of being an attorney.
- R. Terwilliger: Although today we are swamped with attorneys, aren't we?
- S. Mundy:** When I started, I was the fourth one in Metuchen. We now have over thirty-five in Metuchen.
- R. Terwilliger: Do we really? And all making money? [laughs]
- S. Mundy:** I hope. I don't know.

R. Terwilliger: That's amazing!

**S. Mundy: Thirty-five in Metuchen and there were—well, I don't know how many people there were in Metuchen at the time. Of course, I don't think Metuchen itself supports the thirty-five. I think Edison Township—oh, an awful lot of attorneys in there. There is a great surplus of attorneys in this country, no question about that.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, I think it's every mother's dream to have her son either an attorney or a doctor.

**S. Mundy: Well, we have a big shortage of doctors.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah, well, if they'd make it easier to get into med school.

**S. Mundy: They should make it easier, yes.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, because something that really does upset me is to see that we have foreign interns at our local Kennedy Hospital and when I hear of schoolmates of my son that have to go to Mexico to do their internship. I mean that just doesn't seem—my logical mind tells me something's wrong when we have to do that.

**S. Mundy: Well, as I say, graduated from Rutgers. I graduated from Rutgers Law School. My two sons graduated from Rutgers, and yet when they made applications to Rutgers Law School, oh no, they couldn't get in. And yet they will take communists from New York State, New York City; they will accept them, but they wouldn't accept my sons. As I say, with a background of Rutgers for me and for them—**

R. Terwilliger: Right, I thought as an alumni that they—?

**S. Mundy: You would think so. Oh no, so I had to send them out to University of Tulsa [in Oklahoma] at considerable increased expense. So when I get a request from—my class agent sent me a request for a substantial contribution to Rutgers in celebration of our fiftieth anniversary, which is coming up in 1979, and I wrote back and said, "I wouldn't give one dime to Rutgers if it meant they had to close the joint tomorrow." And I mean it; not a dime! Rutgers under Mason Gross went to hell!**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah. A lot of people have said this.

**S. Mundy: There's no question about it. They admit people who are unqualified, and they say, "Well, we'll get them in here and qualify them."**

R. Terwilliger: Make it a better world.

**S. Mundy: I'm sick of all these do-gooders and bleeding hearts.**

R. Terwilliger: Yeah. Well, I of course agree with you. Even aside from that, what's happened to tradition where a father and a son and a son go to the same school? I mean, these are the kinds of things we just kind of throw to the wind like seeds anymore. And people

will say things like, “What’s happened to society?” Well, you know it’s these basic things that have changed.

**S. Mundy:** **Yeah, that’s right.**

R. Terwilliger: You know it makes it very difficult to be traditional anymore. So anyway, we could get off on that and get real mad with one another. I’m going to check the tape, Sherwood, and see how much more we have for winding this up. [recording paused]

Sherwood, we have, I think, probably about five more minutes left on the tape, and my summation thoughts were that I’d be really interested in some of your personal thoughts and feelings about Metuchen as a man here with such deep roots.

**S. Mundy:** **Well, of course, I have never lived anyplace but Metuchen, so I am not qualified to compare it to anyplace else. I have done considerable traveling in recent years and have seen how people live in other countries and other places. I like Metuchen. Metuchen has a spirit about it, a cohesiveness which you don’t find, I think, in other places. There is a feeling among the people that they are part of Metuchen. I think anyone who has lived here for any time at all feels that Metuchen is his town. So many other places I understand are simply places where people live, where they don’t become part of the town itself. They don’t participate in anything; it’s simply, in effect, a bedroom for them. They work out of town, they simply come back there and sleep and leave. They don’t participate in any of the town activities. They don’t feel that the town is their town. I know people who have moved away from town and yet have come back and said, “It wasn’t the same. We didn’t feel that we belonged.” And I think that is the one thing about Metuchen that is outstanding. That people who do live here have a feeling of belonging. And perhaps that’s one of the reasons why people who have lived here only a short time attempt to tell the old-timers how they should run the town, which of course is resented by the old-timers. [chuckles] They say, “Live here a little longer before you tell us what’s wrong with the town. We like it this way. Now if you feel it’s wrong, be a little patient and maybe we’ll listen to you.”**

**But Metuchen to me—when I was a small boy you couldn’t buy anything in town—but today, there is very little that you might want that you can’t get in Metuchen. In spite of all the shopping centers around here, our stores continue to do a good business. Morris Stores is a prime example of that. You get quality there and anything that you don’t like, no argument, you simply take it back. Metuchen has developed from a little town where they had Papa Frank’s little general store [at 418 Main Street] with the penny whistles in the back, up three or four steps up before you could get in. It’s developed from that into a modern town. I don’t want to call it a city. It’s not a city. I don’t want it to be a city. But to me at least, I feel that I am ... [recording ends]**

[MISSING TAPE]

R. Terwilliger: This is the thing. I think you’re absolutely correct in your observation that I resent people reacting to something they haven’t truly felt. I think Metuchen is a town that you have to live in, get involved in, and kind of feel what it’s all about, what kind of pride is taken. It has changed a great deal over the years, but still there is something, as you say, very unique and special. And I think again, you’re absolutely right in that it

is the people. That people care enough to involve themselves and commit themselves to things here in town has kept it the nice small town that it is. So you go on with some of your feelings and thoughts. How about your children? Do they have this same kind of feeling?

**S. Mundy:** Yes, I think so. One of the things that would show it is that Nicholas was content to build his house across the street from me on Grove Avenue. My daughter Melinda is married to a schoolteacher, who teaches down in Holmdel. But rather than live down in Holmdel, they were satisfied to buy a house up on Highland Avenue where Emily Demarest used to live. And she wanted to live there because she felt Metuchen was her town. And of course, my wife is tickled to death because she's within five minutes of our house.

**R. Terwilliger:** Don't you feel also, Sherwood, that this continuity, even of family, in town is terribly important to the stability of these new families, like Nicholas's family and your daughter's family? Part of our problem with society today is that we are transferred all over the world, there were no roots, there were no grandparents, and I think the end result is beginning to show now.

**S. Mundy:** Yes, I think that's true in many cases. When things aren't going to affect you personally, as happens with people who work for corporations where they are transferred from here to here to here, they of course can't care as much as a person who is going to live in the town for a long time. If some proposition comes up, they'll say, "Well, I don't care about that because I'm not going to be here three years from now, or five years from now." But when you're going to live here the rest of your life, you going to make sure that what comes up is going to be good for the town. So that living in a town for a long time, to me, is important both to the town and to the individual.

**R. Terwilliger:** I think that this is the uniqueness about Metuchen again, is where we've had this happy balance. There are people with real roots here. We have a lot of transient people, but so far we've been able to—I hate to use the word "control"—but it's been enough of a balance that we haven't had happen to us what's happened in other communities.

**S. Mundy:** Yes, that's very true. It used to be that half of Metuchen would leave in the morning to go to New York City to work and then come back at five o'clock. I remember when Milton Mook was going to run for mayor. Now Milton Mook had a business in New York City, and he would leave here at say seven o'clock in the morning and he wouldn't get home until six o'clock at night. And he was running for mayor on one of the tickets; I don't know whether it was Democratic or Republican. And my grandfather wrote an article for the then *Metuchen Reporter*, and he said Milton Mook was a fine fellow personally, but he never sees Metuchen by daylight.

**R. Terwilliger:** And yet probably, truthfully, this man had a lot of feeling for his community.

**S. Mundy:** Oh, there's no question about that, sure. Milton Mook was a fine man and would have been an asset.

**R. Terwilliger:** Did he win the election?



**S. Mundy:** I don't think he did. I don't know. I think Washington Wilson was running against him at the time.

R. Terwilliger: Washington Wilson?

**S. Mundy:** Oh yes, everybody called him Wattie, Wattie Wilson.

R. Terwilliger: Wattie Wilson. And now was he a Democrat, Mr. Wilson<sup>8</sup>?

**S. Mundy:** I don't know. [laughter] Believe it or not, political party has never been as important in Metuchen as elsewhere. It makes very little difference really whether the Democrats are in power or the Republicans are in power. I think those who are running the borough really run it for the advantage of the borough.

R. Terwilliger: Well, most people are people with roots. They care.

**S. Mundy:** Yes, it's true. When one party gets in, the members of that party get the municipal jobs.

R. Terwilliger: Although our mayor said, that in his case, he has given more jobs to Republicans. And I believe it.

**S. Mundy:** I'd have to be shown myself. I would say that—that aside—I have never seen, with rare exceptions, any corruption.

R. Terwilliger: Right, that's true. And if there is anyone who tends toward that type of thing or that type of politics, they never last.

**S. Mundy:** That's right.

R. Terwilliger: You know they run themselves dry and they're gone in no time.

**S. Mundy:** Right now, of course, if you want to be anything in Metuchen, you've got to be a Democrat. But the pendulum will swing the other way. It always has. And then the Republicans will be in for a while, and then something will happen, and the Democrats will be in. But regardless of which party is in power, it's what is best for Metuchen that determines how they act.

R. Terwilliger: I think most of our good mayors, and I mean it really, they have to be good men; it takes a lot of their personal time to do the things they have to do—are very committed to what they do and believe it or not, they want to come out looking good. So it is a case of working very hard and very diligently for the good of the town.

And well, I think that probably about winds it up.

**S. Mundy:** All right, well good, Ruth.

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<sup>8</sup> Washington Wilson was a Republican who served as mayor of Metuchen five times from 1909 to 1911 and from 1913 to 1923.

R. Terwilliger: I certainly enjoyed it, Sherwood.

**S. Mundy: Well, I've enjoyed doing it.**

R. Terwilliger: Sometime I'd love to do a special tape on just your travels. I'd love to hear more about them and the places you've been and what you've seen.

**S. Mundy: I saw Dr. [Adolph] Behrenberg<sup>9</sup> today standing at the lavatory there, waiting for it to open. And he said, "What are you doing in town?" I said, "Well, I might ask you the same thing," because no one has traveled more than he has.**

R. Terwilliger: I'd love to do a taping. I do want to do a taping with him.

**S. Mundy: He said he is going to Israel this year and stay there.**

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Adolph Behrenberg was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church for thirty-five years.