

Ted Haas

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Interviewer: Phyllis Boeddinghaus
Transcribers: Janena Benjamin, 2004 and Laura Cabbage-Draper, April 2020
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Abstract: Theodore F. Haas Jr. (1936-) is the son of Theodore F. Haas Sr. and Mary T. (Lavery) Haas and the oldest of four boys. His parents were originally from Moorestown and settled in Metuchen in 1934 along West Chestnut Avenue in the Radio Section of Metuchen. His father worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad as a ticket agent at the Metuchen Railroad Station, retiring in 1971. His mother was parishioner of St. Francis Cathedral, a member of its Altar Rosary Society, and the second vice president of the St. Francis Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

Mr. Haas graduated from St. Peter's High School in New Brunswick and he served in the United States Army from 1958 to 1960. Following his service, he was employed by the Metuchen Post Office as a letter carrier and a clerk. Mr. Haas is also a member of St. Francis Cathedral. He married his wife Donna and they have a son, Theodore Haas III. He currently lives in Edison, New Jersey.

In this interview, Mr. Haas discusses his family and stories about growing up in the Radio Section of Metuchen. He also talks extensively about his memories of the stores and businesses along Main Street (downtown and South Metuchen) and Middlesex Avenue. Other recollections include discussions about Woodwild Park, Clive Hills, Port Reading Railroad, boxing, Metuchen Inn, local architects, Hillside Avenue, Beacon Hill, Suzy Parker, and the White Sisters of Africa.

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P. Boeddinghaus: This tape is an oral history under the auspices of the Metuchen[-Edison] Historical Society. It is an informal tape interviewing Ted Haas from Metuchen on Saturday, November 13, 1993 at the Metuchen Public Library. [recording paused]

[recording begins mid-sentence] ... and don't be surprised about how your voice sounds when they come out very ... [recording paused]

Morning Ted, thank you so much for coming to talk with me today. Let's start out by asking where your parents are from?

T. Haas: They're from Moorestown, New Jersey.

P. Boeddinghaus: Moorestown, South Jersey?

T. Haas: South Jersey. Moorestown. Father [Theodore F. Haas Sr.] came from a bakery family and my mother [Mary T. (Lavery) Haas] was from a farm, a farm in Moorestown. It's right at the intersection; you see the big ship by General Electric [present-day Lockheed Martin at 199 Borton Landing Road], that's where used to be my grandfather's farm in Moorestown.

P. Boeddinghaus: And so what brought them to the Metuchen area?

T. Haas: Well, my father was a railroader and he followed the railroad. And he was in South Jersey along the shore, Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], New York, and he thought it was better to work in North Jersey than in South Jersey. So that's how they came to be in—first they got married in 1933, and then they went for a year in Rahway, and then they moved 1934 to Metuchen on 201 West Chestnut Avenue. And they rented there until August of 1939 when we bought our house across the street, 114 West Chestnut [Avenue].

P. Boeddinghaus: Is that the Radio Section?

T. Haas: Yes, it is the Radio Section. And how it got its name was the construction company that was building all the homes in the area used the Radio Realty Company of New York City, and that's how they got the name, the section (Radio Section). And from what I understand, it was between [West] Chestnut Avenue, Plainfield [Avenue], Main Street, and Central Avenue and all the streets in that section were called the Radio Section of Metuchen.

P. Boeddinghaus: And the streets were named after universities?

T. Haas: Yes, all except three, I think: Center Street, Chestnut, and Midland [Avenue]. The rest are all named after a university: Rutgers [Street], Princeton [Street], University Avenue, Columbia [Avenue], and Harvard [Avenue], yeah. And different ones and as I think of Columbia Avenue, I always think of Mr. [Terrence] Quinn at 204 Columbia. He was running for Democratic councilman [in 1942]. And as children about nine years old, Mr. [Joseph] Kneisel who lived at Chestnut Avenue (213¹ West Chestnut), he got us all together, about forty kids, and promised us a popsicle if we would parade around the Radio Section drumming up for him the campaign. And we all had pots and pans and we paraded for about an hour and then we all—it was a big thing to get a popsicle afterwards.

P. Boeddinghaus: And were your efforts successful? Was he elected?

T. Haas: No. No, it wasn't because at the time it was a Republican town. The only Democrats were in the Radio Section, I think, at that time. Because the first Democrat that ever was in was Mr. [Karl] Metzger² in 1953. The other thing I remember in the Radio Section is 209 Harvard [Avenue], Mr. [Herbert] Meidhof. He was a railroader and his son, Herbie, they hadn't seen in forty-eight months, which is four years. And when he came home from the service, they had a big time on the street and he had railroad flares going up one side and down the

¹ Joseph Kneisel lived at 215 West Chestnut Avenue.

² In 1953, Karl Metzger was elected mayor of Metuchen in the first local election sweep for the Democratic Party in sixteen years.

other of Harvard Avenue and parts of Chestnut. And it was after the Second World War.

The only other thing I can remember is next door to my house on 114 West Chestnut was noted as the Red Hills. And they were a pile of clay, red dirt, that we used to ride our bikes around and everything. That was called the Red Hills, which is now like 611 or 613 Main Street. We used to play there all the time on the Red Hills.

The other thing we remember, on the other side of 200 [West] Chestnut down to, oh, it's 310, I think, is Mr. [Frank] Krivas' house. That used to be a ballfield and we used to play ball there until after the Second World War, about 1947, when they put the houses. But that was our ballfield and all the elder men in the area used to play horseshoes; they have one side and we have the [other] and every night they used to play horseshoes. Mr. Estrunga [phonetic], Mr. Kneisel, and Jake Haulenbeek [Jacob Haulenbeek at 118 Columbia Avenue] was another one who used to play horseshoes out there. And we each had a—and the other time for the ballfield used to be for Prehodkas, who lived down on Center Street (205 Center Street), which really was Grushewsky, but she was a Prehodka [Anna Prehodka]. They used to have their family outing at the ballfield. They'd have a ball, they'd have a picnic, and big time there. I remember that as a child growing up there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Were you invited to the picnic?

T. Haas: No, I wasn't. No, no. It was strictly family. Mom said, "Nope. Keep away. That's family."

P. Boeddinghaus: Like a family reunion?

T. Haas: Yeah, right. And there used to be a path along the side of our house that went to Maple Avenue. And then there was another path that came from the corner of Main [Street] and Maple and cut behind the back of our garage and then across the ballfield over to Harvard Avenue. And you could always tell what time it was because the men coming home from work on the train, they used to come home and there was quite a few men who were railroaders in our neighborhood: Mr. Clark [phonetic] on Midland, Mr. [Andrew] Markano on [305] Midland, Mr. Meidhof on Harvard, and my father, Mr. Kneisel on Chestnut, Mr. [Paul] English on [216] Columbia. They were all railroad; it seemed to be a railroad town.

And while living in Metuchen in the early years, let's say in the forties before the trees got too tall, you could look out towards the upper part of [East] Chestnut Avenue up into Woodwild Park, and we could see the big flagpole with the flag flying. We never knew why it was. The only thing I can think of now after working in [Metuchen] Post Office all these years, that 56 Oak Avenue was Mrs. [Grace] Miller's address; she lived there. And I think her son or her husband got killed in the First World War. And the American Legion was named after Fugle Miller³. And that's what I have learned over the years. The poles seemed to be behind her house up in Woodwild Park, the highest point. And we could look out

³ The Fugle-Hummer Post 65 of the American Legion was named after Frank Hummer and Edward O. Fugle, who were local residents that died at the Battle St. Mihiel during World War I in September 1918.

and we could always tell which way the wind was blowing by the way the flag was.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, that pole is still there and I never knew the history of it. I've walked around up there.

T. Haas: Yeah, I just assumed it was put up by the Millers because it is directly behind their house.

P. Boeddinghaus: Interesting.

T. Haas: So I wasn't sure. And getting back to the Radio Section, different things that we used to do is Geary's Store. We used to have Geary's Store at Plainfield [Avenue] and Central Avenue. And they had a little store, like if you get five people in it, it was crowded. It was run by Sadie [Geary] and Mary [Ryan], [who] were sisters, and their brother Jack [Joseph Geary].

P. Boeddinghaus: I remember that store.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. Sadie and Mary. And if somebody came in for a bottle of booze, she'd say, "Lift up the bread and open the cardboard box." And they could get the booze out if they wanted.

P. Boeddinghaus: Because it was Prohibition then?

T. Haas: No. No, it was after that when I was there. But they were noted to have the best ice cream because the two little—Mary and Sadie would always dip it out. It wasn't frozen in a half-gallon or a pint or a quart. It was always that way. And the lunchmeat was very good because they took their time slicing it. And they took more time wrapping it up afterward, then slicing it. [laughter] And I know as a letter carrier when I used to stop there to eat, because there was nothing else to eat at those days, I used to go in and I used to have a ham sandwich and cheese, a Pepsi, and a Tastykake. And it would cost me twenty-eight cents.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh my goodness.

T. Haas: Yeah. And if you smoked, they would give you a cigarette because Mack McCarrahan [phonetic], the regular letter carrier, smoked. Gee, I always gave him a cigarette. But they were one of the few stores that had a liquor license and then years afterward, I guess it was in early sixties, that the Dessel brothers bought them out.

P. Boeddinghaus: Bought the license.

T. Haas: Bought the license and whatnot, and they were there for a while and then they moved to Central Avenue. The one that I remember that we used to go to the store was Tkachuk's down on [172] Central Avenue and Maple [Avenue]. And they were more like a butcher store and they used to compete with Shapiro's on Durham Avenue, I think it's 84 Durham Avenue. We used to as a kid, I remember my mother, in the Second World War, meat was hard to find, get. And we used to

go to Shapiro's or Tkachuk's. Mostly we went to Shapiro's, but a lot of people went to Tkachuk's in the old days.

P. Boeddinghaus: I went to high school with Walter Tkachuk.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. So now it's a vacuum cleaning store, Tkachuk's is. And it used to be Joe Juliano's Barber Shop after Tkachuk's for years, and I remember going there all the time. We never went down too much, down to that part because the people down that area had mean dogs and the dogs were always loose so we didn't like to go. [laughter] Anything past Center Street, we didn't go.

And the other one who was in that area, but lived on Martin Street, was the Grieb's (Pete Grieb) and they used to own a market on Main Street in Metuchen (Supreme) [Grieb's Food Market at 458 Main Street] where the bicycle shop is now in Metuchen. I remember Pete Grieb and his mother and father, and they had the same type of store, but we didn't go there.

And I remember [Lester] Olmezer's chicken farm [Metuchen Poultry Farm at 365 Central Avenue], now is where the condos are as you first go in on the left-hand side before you go under the [Port Reading Railroad] bridge going towards St. Joe's [High School]. That was considered part of Plainfield Avenue, that used to be 101 Plainfield Avenue, and then the next was St. Joe's High School. And in the old days, when it was like a seminary, I remember going over there and getting vegetables from the brothers because my father used to get them tickets for the train when they couldn't get on, so they would give us some vegetables. And the other thing, they used to have grapes and peaches. And I remember my father said that they used to send up their pigs on the train. They used to have to unload it at the railroad station—the pigs from Bay St. Louis, down in St. Louis, Mississippi (Bay St. Louis, Mississippi). And they used to bring them up and they used to have livestock on there. They used to have the cows eating the grass out in the front. And I remember, I don't know what year, but it must have been very young, I would say 1940 or 1941, I remember they had a band and they had blue uniforms—I can remember the blue uniforms—and they marched in our Memorial Day Parade. And everybody didn't know that they even had a band. But we could hear them on our porch when they practiced over there. And then they dissolved for some reason.

P. Boeddinghaus: I was going to just interject something. You had told me when you rented in Radio Section and your mother went to pay the rent at the rental office and the rent had been raised. That's a good story.

T. Haas: Yeah, the rent had been raised. I think it was seventy-five cents a month. And we had to pay Mr. [Harry] Meyers, who had—the rental office [Meyers & Selover] at that time was over at 703 Main Street, the second house on the left past Midland Avenue. And we had to go and he wrote a nice letter to my mother saying he was sorry, but he had to raise it seventy-five cents a month. And I think it went from \$26.25 to \$27.00 a month, and that was in a period of time I would say, but I can remember it was probably 1938 or [19]39 because we moved out of the house on nineteenth of July or August of [19]39. And my father—I remember that hot day—and he worked for the railroad, so they had a railroad truck come down and he and couple of other guys from the railroad moved us across the street. And I

remember quite well being so hot and all because that day my mother had soda and beer for the men, and we could have all the soda we want, which was a treat to us. Because my father always liked—we could always have soda, but it was always Hoffman [Pale Dry] Ginger Ale. He always had Hoffman Ginger Ale.

P. Boeddinghaus: Was his favorite.

T. Haas: Yeah, I think that, over the years, that's what it was. And I remember as a kid, Mr. Dessel (one of the Dessel boys) would always walk the neighborhood with like a head of cabbage or a head of something they had fresh that day. And he'd ask us to take an order, "Would you like an order? Would you like to order today? We'll deliver it this afternoon." And I remember them knocking at the door. They would come about every other day, knock at the door, "We have strawberries, fresh strawberries," and how much they were and, "Don't worry about paying now, [pay] when we deliver, or pay at the end of the month." Anything, they were very good.

P. Boeddinghaus: They were always very accommodating and wasn't that enterprising to think to go around the neighborhood like that?

T. Haas: And I remember there were two other people that used to come in the neighborhood all the time ringing the bell. One was the knife sharpener, yeah, and Mr. Goldberg [phonetic] from Perth Amboy, the ragman. He used to holler, "Rags! Rags! Metal! Any metal for sale?" You know he would buy it from you if you had any. But they would make the trip about—I would say the knife sharpener would go at least once a month and the other, Mr. Goldberg [phonetic], would go about every two weeks or every three weeks.

P. Boeddinghaus: You know someone else mentioned that ragman, Joe Fater. He mentioned him also. That was a part of the community.

T. Haas: Yeah. Once in a while you would get a huckster coming through, but only in the summertime. But the Dessels would go around and knock at the door and say, "Hey, you know you want anything? We'll be glad to deliver it. If you just want a head of cabbage—" My mother would always say, "I just need a head of cabbage, but I don't really want—" "That's okay, we will stop."

P. Boeddinghaus: They were very good about it. How about a bakery, Dugan's [phonetic] or—?

T. Haas: Yeah, Dugan's [phonetic] Bakery used to stop at the house. And we used to have Forsgate Milk Company from Jamesburg was our deliveryman. The other two were popular in the area were Cooper's Dairy from Iselin and Wood Brook Farms in Edison now, and they were the other big ones in Forsgate. And we had Dugan's [phonetic]; we had Bond Bread. Bond Bread was another one we had in the area. And the other thing we used to have, you used to see, which you don't see, was like a deliveryman, was your insurance man. He came once a month and he knocked on the door and you would give him—like my mother would give him a dollar for the nickel policies.

P. Boeddinghaus: Write it in the book.

- T. Haas:** Yeah, write it in the book and say, "See you next month." And that's what you did, and it was a good way of—
- P. Boeddinghaus: How quickly you forget all those personal services we used to have.
- T. Haas:** Yeah, we had that. Now everything is through the mail and you don't even see your insurance man. But every month you would have—and the two leading ones were Metropolitan [Life Insurance Company] and Prudential [Financial]. And my father, if we went down to the shore for vacation, my father would always leave the bill (the money) for Mr. [Lewis] Lehrer, who was the Metropolitan man, lived on [43] Williams Street, always leave it at Herb Seldow's. You could always leave a message at Herb. Or my mother would call and say my father is coming down, tell him to stop and pick up this or that and Herb would be glad to help you out down there.
- P. Boeddinghaus: You've brought back a lot of memories for me also. My family was like that too and dealt with Dessels a lot and they were so accommodating. Yeah, that's interesting.
- T. Haas:** And the other thing was not too many—well, an awful lot of people in the Radio Section didn't have cars. We walked everything, place, and if we did go to the store, we always pulled a wagon and brought it home on a wagon. Yeah, we would meet dad from the railroad station and on his lunch hour, he would go to the Acme Store or the Mutual [Grocery Company] Store [at 420 Main Street], which was next to Boyt's Drug Store [at 411 Main Street]. Now it's a vacant store, okay. It's a vacant store now; it used to be part of Morris [Stores at 413 Main Street]. That used to be the Mutual Store or the Acme Store.
- P. Boeddinghaus: The Acme was here at Main [Street] and Highland [Avenue].
- T. Haas:** Right. And the other one was at 429 Main Street was the A&P [Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company], if you can remember that being there. There was an A&P there and then there was an A&P on South Main Street that Walter Blyer used to be manager. This here was right where the Metuchen Savings and Loan [Association] is [at 437 Main Street]. Okay, you used to go in and the butcher shop was there and the food. I think them and Knox's [Tavern, formerly located at 932 Middlesex Avenue] are the only ones left that had the original liquor license from way back because the A&P, because they were here. And that was it. But we always used to go to the Mutual Store or the Acme Store. I don't know why, but we used to—my father used to go in, go shopping, and we used to meet him with the wagon and we'd bring it home. Coming down wasn't bad because you had the wind to your back, but when you're going north, you had it to your face all the time.
- P. Boeddinghaus: The prevailing winds, yes.
- T. Haas:** The other thing, it was quite a shock that across from St. Joe's right after the Second World War, I think it was maybe 1950 or something, the first development I'd seen coming into Metuchen was called Nancy Village [phonetic].
- P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, I remember that, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah. It was part of Willow [Road], Willow and Applewood [Court], and that's it. And then over the years, they extended it to Miller Drive and Turner [Court]. That was like in the late fifties when that apartment that was put in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, that big farmhouse out there now, did they own the property and that was sold off?

T. Haas: Yeah, they owned the—Paul Hejl, Hejl. Remember Hejl? Paul? He used to hang around with Bobby Mashanic [Robert Mashanic] and all—

P. Boeddinghaus: That was H-e-j-h-1 or something like that?

T. Haas: Yeah. H-i-e-l or something like that, yeah. He sold Nancy Village [phonetic] and then the other part of it was sold by—oh, I can't think of the name. They live on Central Avenue, they own 170, 168 and they own the other section, and they still farm and they still sell their products out there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yes, yes, there's still some corn and tomatoes and peppers she sells there at the stand.

T. Haas: Right. But that's all I can remember of the Radio Section. Across from Central Avenue was Forrest Street, which was noted for us. We used to pedal down [on bicycles], it was a thrill of a drive down Forrest Street [to] the dumps. The city dumps used to be there. And you would never go across the [Lehigh Valley Railroad] tracks because that was Dismal Swamp. But as Boy Scouts, we used to go down to the end of Forrest Street on the right and go camping. We used to go up along the railroad track and then come down the railroad track with Gussie Anderson [phonetic], who was a scout, and his three boys and we used to go there. But Forrest Street was strictly the dumps; nobody would ever think of living on Forrest Street because of the dumps at that time. And then there was Aylin Street and Norcross [Avenue] over there. And when I started delivering mail there, they didn't even deliver down to the end of the street. They all used to have their boxes at the upper part of—at the intersection of Forrest and Norcross, so we wouldn't have to walk all the way down to the houses. [laughs] We would just throw the mail into the RFD [Rural Free Delivery] boxes at those times. That's what I remember of Forrest and Aylin Street. And somebody told me Aylin Street was named after Aylin Pierson, the architect, but I don't know how true that is. But that was a thing I heard over the years.

P. Boeddinghaus: And now that's become an industrial area back in there now.

T. Haas: Right, yeah. It's all industrial in the upper part.

P. Boeddinghaus: Light industrial.

T. Haas: Yeah, and they blocked it off so you don't come through Forrest anymore and Aylin Street. And then the other part, when I was a child, I used to play on East Chestnut [Avenue]. When it snowed, we always went sleigh riding on the upper part of East Chestnut and Linden Avenue. And Pierce's [phonetic] house, I think it was, we used to go on their lawn and get hollered at. We used to come down the hill and then continue on Linden and go down Chestnut—

P. Boeddinghaus: And where was Pierce's⁴ [phonetic] house?

T. Haas: It used to be on the corner [of] Linden and Chestnut on the right. One house was Dr. [Sol] Gurshman's house [at 83 Linden Avenue] and across from it, we used to go there. And everybody used to go, and the town used to block it off so we could go sleigh riding and all. And we used to go, and a lot of the parents and all older people used to go at night, sleigh riding down there, use a toboggan we used to have that was up there.

P. Boeddinghaus: May I ask you, since you're speaking about that neighborhood, about the house in Woodwild Park? Do you remember that house years ago?

T. Haas: No, I don't remember the house in Woodwild Park. But what I remember up in that area is Connor's Pond; we used to go skating. And up where Dr. [John] Kangos lives at 105 Oak Avenue, during the Second World War, they had a big tower built there and the Civil Air Patrol used to go up and take turns looking for planes up there when I was a kid. And you know it would seem funny to have it, but that's where they had it. They had it there because that was all field in there and we used to go in the fields. The only house that was there was Carrados [phonetic], which was at 251 [East] Chestnut, and the next one was all the way down the end of Chestnut, which is now where Ray Floersch lives.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, that's the house I meant.

T. Haas: Yeah, 295 [East Chestnut]. Yeah, I remember that; that was the only thing. But in between them, where the houses are now, we used to go in the woods there and go down ice skating on Connor's Pond in that time. And that's the only house I remember back in the woods. I didn't know—you know you meant that, I thought there was one in the middle of Woodwild Park.

P. Boeddinghaus: No, I meant that [John] Connor's house⁵.

T. Haas: Yeah. I never knew who lived there. The one I knew that was there was [Norman] Ferrara [at 295 East Chestnut Avenue]. And he was the one I remember being in there at the time and even over the years until Ray Floersch bought the house. We used to go there and Carrados [phonetic] and we used to go across [unclear], just cut through the woods, make our own path, there was a little path to Connor's Pond and there were no houses there at all and on the other side of [East] Chestnut. And Christol Street, where I remember, Christol Street used to be a coal yard up at the end of the street, right opposite Ross Avenue. If you took

⁴ He may be referring to 82 Linden Avenue, which was owned by Percy G. Craig.

⁵ John Connor's house, often referred to as the Woodwild House, was constructed by Thomas W. Strong sometime between 1855, when he purchased the lot, and 1870. Thomas W. Strong acquired all the undeveloped land from Main Street to Grove Avenue and from Middlesex Avenue to the Port Reading Railroad from various land owners in the 1850s and named the area Woodwild Park. After Thomas W. Strong passed away, the land was sold to Charles Corbin and divided into building lots and sold for development with four acres donated for a park. It does not appear that Charles Corbin ever lived in Woodwild House. He sold the lot on which the house stood to Frances Connor, wife of John Connor, in 1897, just a month after he acquired the property himself. The Connor family lived in the house for many years. Eventually the house was torn down to make way for a new development along Chestnut Lane and East Chestnut Avenue.

Ross all the way down, there was a coal yard. But Ross Avenue didn't go all the way across at that time. Ross Avenue used to be just [East] Chestnut Avenue and there just like a field there, you used to just go down. And then they extended it down to Mayfield [Place], Ross Avenue and there was nothing there that I can remember when I was a kid. And then I remember we used to play on Mayfield [Place]. We used to have war games on Mayfield until after the Second World War, they built the—not the condos—but the—

P. Boeddinghaus: Duplexes.

T. Haas: Duplexes, right. I remember that. But I remember going down, driving our bikes to the end of Christol Street because that used to be a tough area and they used to—dogs used to run off. We used to go across the tracks there, okay, and go across the tracks and then you could see it was like a racetrack around there. Years ago, they used to say that's where the Metuchen Garden Club, I think, or Riding Hike Club—

P. Boeddinghaus: The [Metuchen] Riding and Hunt Club.

T. Haas: Right, used to be. And they used to go and have their times there. But we used to go there and if you look from the [Port Reading] railroad tracks there at Ross and look up, and on the other side of the hill, we used to—another place you used to go ice skating [was] Little Africa, it used to be called.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, I never heard that before.

T. Haas: Yeah, Little Africa. The pond was in shape of Africa so we used to call it Little Africa. And that is where 11 Clive Hills Road is, right in that particular area. The only thing that was up in there was a house on Mason Drive and I think it's on Bryant—not Bryant [Avenue]—I think it's Wistar [Avenue]. It was Otto Ruckert's house [at 149 Mason Drive] and Otto Ruckert lived there and used to go down over the railroad tracks at Ross and make a right and follow it, and make a left and you go through the [Woodwild Park] woods. And we used to go—the other fellows, not myself—used to go catching muskrats up in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yeah. There was so much green, swampy.

T. Haas: And it was swampy, yeah, yeah, and whatnot in there. But Otto Ruckert was in there. But from what I understand, Otto Ruckert went back to visit in Germany, and they got tied up and they couldn't get out of Germany until after the Second World War. Then they came back and then when Northview Acres—one section was Clive Hills and the other was Northview Acres—they wanted to buy it. I think a Mr. [Philip T.] Ruegger [Jr.] was the builder and he wanted to buy the house and rip it down and they refused. So the house is an odd shape. If you ever go up there, the house is a very odd, it's an odd-shaped house that don't fit in with the other houses. And it's on the corner, I think, of Wistar and Mason on the north side on the corner.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, I'll have to look at that, yes, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah, that was Otto Ruckert's house.

P. Boeddinghaus: I recall that. I can visualize it now, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah, and that was a big dispute. They wanted to tear it down, put all the same type of houses there. And I remember that in that area of Clive Street. The other thing I remember on Clive, it used to be [you] walk along the railroad tracks, if you made a left, you went down, there were two wells for trains. You could get well water; it was very good water. We used to pump and get a drink of water there all the time.

P. Boeddinghaus: Now what railroad was that?

T. Haas: That was the [Port] Reading Railroad. And what I remember as a kid there going to [Samuel] Wiley's house [at 36 Clive Street] right underneath the railroad bridge on Clive Street on the right, and then on the left was Dr. [Clarence] Hofer's house [at 35 Hofer Court]. And we went to school with the Wiley children. The older Wileys and the Hofers used to come and to make money, they would put on plays in Hofer's barn, which they just tore down the house, they just tore the barn down. They used to go in and they would always make it like a scary room with a white sheet and the light and all. And they would charge us a nickel to see it. And we'd come from all the Radio Section to see the play. [laughs]

But the other thing I can remember there was during the Second World War, you used to be able to go there and watch the troop trains go out and you'd stand on the side and it was very hard to get candy in that days, like Hershey and chocolates and all. But the troops could have it and they used to throw a Hershey bar wrapped with a letter going home to their mother because their mail was being censored. And then I remember bringing it home and my mother would mail out the letters to the troops. And when the war was over, it was just the opposite. When they came back, you stood on the side and they threw all foreign coins to you as souvenirs. And I remember that on the [Port] Reading Railroad. You could tell the train—the train used to go—it was the [Port] Reading Railroad and Lehigh [Valley Railroad]. And the Lehigh used to come around behind and go down along parallel to Durham Avenue and then cut across now where it's called Reading Road in Edison, is where the train used to cut across to go into Camp Kilmer. And that used to be the other Lehigh. We never went down the Lehigh, but it was easier to get to the Reading Railroad. And basically, it was a coal; you know that track was usually used for coal. But during the war, there was an awful lot of troop movements going out of there at Reading. So I remember that all.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, it sounds like you had a lot of fun as a kid playing outside with your bicycle and the other kids.

T. Haas: And I remember the big thing in what was it, oh, I'd say about 1949 or [19]50, the house at 582 Main Street was being built and it was made out of all Celotex [insulating siding]. It was in the town.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yes. Now which house is that?

T. Haas: Five-hundred-eighty-two Main Street, down almost across from Talmadge [Avenue]. I remember that. That was the Ceternas [phonetic] [that] lived there and he was a big shot with Celotex [Corporation] and he had the house all built and it was supposed to be the first one in the country made out of Celotex and all. And they had people come in from different parts of the country to see it, you know different manufacturers to see how it was and whatnot. And that was the big thing out in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Is that that low ranch house where [the] Boyds used to live?

T. Haas: Yeah right, where Boyds used to live, right. I think Boyds bought it from Ceterna [phonetic]. And the other house was, I remember, was where—that was 582, I'm sorry—and 572 was a vacant field and during the Second World War, they had two big wooden bins there and what we used to do was, we used to collect tin cans and smash them and put them in there, that there. That was the bin at 572 Main Street. I remember that.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, that's neat.

T. Haas: Yeah, it's right across from Talmadge Avenue. But I remember Ceterna's [phonetic] house at 582 Main Street.

P. Boeddinghaus: And you're going to tell me about Main Street, you know how the stores and businesses changed along Main Street?

T. Haas: Yeah. I remember going south from our house, on the left-hand side was Danford's Corner [at 476 Main Street]. Mr. [William] Danford and Daisy Danford in there, and it used to be a soda store mostly. And it isn't a stationery store at that time; it was mostly a delicatessen—not a delicatessen, but a little restaurant.

P. Boeddinghaus: A jet.

T. Haas: Yeah right, you go in and have sandwiches. And then the Ryan Brothers, I remember them. They bought it and they had it for years and then eventually they turned it—the next owners, I don't know. They were I think Sol and Sid that were in there—I don't know their last name—but they turned it more into a stationery store. I remember the barbershop next door, Demott [phonetic] or Demoll [phonetic]?

P. Boeddinghaus: Just to back up a little bit. Do you remember when it was [Benjamin] Ford's Hardware, where you're saying the barbershop [was]?

T. Haas: No.

P. Boeddinghaus: No, see that was years ago. Mr. Ford had a hardware store [at 468 Main Street]. Okay, then after that—

T. Haas: I remember the barbershop, then the Acme [Market] Store [at 470 Main Street]. And then the next thing I remember, which used to be Joe Thomason's Pontiac

Agency [Thomason Motors, Inc. at 460 Main Street]. But when I was a kid, I remember that as Gort's [Bone] China⁶.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, tell me a little more about Gort, yes.

T. Haas: Gort's China was—you could go down Main Street and you could look in the window and you could watch the ladies painting the designs on the fine—it was very fine china. They had very expensive china. And you could go down and you could watch them paint. And they would sit in the window and they would paint, and you could watch them paint. And they were like, they had like two or three—they had the Thomason's building, they got that, and then they had the next one next to it, I think.

P. Boeddinghaus: I picture it.

T. Haas: Yeah. And the one next to it, I think, used to be the gas company.

P. Boeddinghaus: Right, I remember that. But back up to Gort's, did you mother have any pieces of Gort? Because it's highly collectible now. It was only made for a short period of about eleven years. A lot of local women worked there and it is very fine work and very beautiful.

T. Haas: Yeah. You know you talked to me about coming to do this and I got a hold of John Eugene, the lawyer in Metuchen. And he represented Gort's.

P. Boeddinghaus: Did he?

T. Haas: Not him. He got on the tail end of it. Mr. [Henry] Ruttiger on [48] Linden Avenue, he was there. I remember the second Mrs. Gort when I worked at the post office. And she was here until about 1965 and then she moved back to Berlin, Germany. But I remember her, and I asked her about the Gort and she used to tell me that you know it was just—he got very old. He was like eighty or in his eighties. And that's when they, I think, it was the late fifties when they got out of it because it was just too much for him to handle and all. And she was a lot younger than him and she just didn't want to get involved in it. But I really know a lot of people who used to buy Gort's. And we knew Cliff Breen [Clifford Breen] and he worked there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yes. He managed it or something, right?

T. Haas: Yeah, he was the one who got us a piece of the Madonna, Gort. We have it at home. Now I don't know if it's a first or second, but we cherish it. And you know you mention Gort China to people and it's amazing when you read the papers in different museums how Metuchen was like a place for china and whatnot. Because I read in Newark *Star Ledger* about, oh, five or six years ago, [Charles] Volkmar (Avenue), he was a well-known sculptor in clay and whatnot, and his

⁶ The Gort Bone China Company was founded on August 15, 1944 in Metuchen, New Jersey. The business was established by Eric Gort, a Russian artist and sculptor, and his brother Walter Gort, a ceramic engineer that set up the kilns in the factory. Eric Gort trained many high school girls to work in the factory at 456-460 Main Street and they produced some of the highest-quality bone china figurines made in America. While initially successful, the Gort Bone China Company struggled with competing against cheaper foreign imports and closed in the 1950s.

works were up at the Newark Museum and I think they have it there at the Newark Museum.

P. Boeddinghaus: It's highly collectible also.

T. Haas: Yeah, Volkmar [Pottery]. And I never knew where they got the name Volkmar [Place], you know up there, when we delivered mail.

P. Boeddinghaus: That's where they had their studio and it happens that the historical society has one piece of Volkmar. It's a pitcher and a saucer that the pitcher sets on and it was donated to the society by the Bloomfield family. Yeah, the Metuchen-Edison area is known for the clay, the fine clay.

T. Haas: And you mentioned Bloomfield. I worked for Lundy Bloomfield, which his real name is Henry Bloomfield⁷ [incorrect name]. We called him Lundy. He was my boss at the post office for years, about twelve years at least, until he retired. He was an interesting guy. He knew everybody, he knew everything about the town. He really was a historian and he was funny, and he had a good way with the public. People complaining, he could turn them around, they'd be smiling when they left. But Lundy knew all Metuchen and he told me that like the Raritan Arsenal was his grandfather's place. His grandfather [Charles A. Bloomfield] came from Mexico as a machinist, you know had machine shops and was quite well do. And he told me that he bought from the [Pennsylvania] railroad tracks by Menlo Park all the way down to the Raritan River, but then he lost it because he wanted to make it farming and it was all clay. And then eventually as he lost it, he got into the clay business. And he told me that that used to be all his grandfather's. Lundy Bloomfield, and his brother Bull [Harold R. Bloomfield], they used to live on [67] Upland Avenue, worked for Celotex for years. But Lundy was the guy; he knew everything about it.

P. Boeddinghaus: Did you ever see a picture of the family estate out in the Clara Barton section?

T. Haas: I have seen once.

P. Boeddinghaus: Did you ever see the actual house?

T. Haas: No, I just saw a picture of it.

P. Boeddinghaus: It was beautiful. It was a gorgeous place. One woman in the family, Eleanor Bloomfield [Lundy's sister], did a tape years ago. It was very interesting.

T. Haas: And you know speaking of that, I heard from somebody in Metuchen here that Pat Bloomfield [Patricia (Ward) Bloomfield] lives in Fairfax, Virginia now, Lundy's wife Pat. And she was very active in the Girl Scouts in Middlesex County. And I know she's still living there as of this date down in Fairfax, and she might have some artifacts she could give to you or more.

P. Boeddinghaus: She might have been the one that donated this. No, no, that was Volkmar. I'm getting the two clay companies mixed up.

⁷ His full name was Howard Lundy Bloomfield.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. And the other person I remember in that particular line was Mr. [Francis Joseph] von Tury⁸. And my father has an ashtray home and I had it myself from Mr. von Tury. And he used to come in all the time and he was quite well-known in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. And he did work—I know he told me—in the Capitol in Washington [DC; District of Columbia]. He did the tiling in Baltimore Railroad Station and he did quite a few designs on highways in New Jersey / North Jersey, he did, he told me.

P. Boeddinghaus: Did he do one of the tunnels? The tiles for one of the tunnels?

T. Haas: Yeah, I think he did. I don't know which one it was, but I remember hearing that story. And the other thing was in his eighties when he was called on to do the railroad station in Baltimore, they tried to match clay and they went to Curran Pfeiff [Corporation] in Edison, who are in commercial ceramics. And the boys used to go out now on the edges of where Woodbridge Center [Shopping Mall at 250 Woodbridge Center Drive] is and they would go out and get clay and they would use all kinds of mixtures to get the right mixture for the clay and especially for the clay for the Capitol. They wanted the same identical. So they did a lot of it, so George Pfeiff, the father, but it was mostly the two boys who were involved in with Mr. von Tury because when he closed the shop in Perth Amboy, he went down to theirs and did a lot of work out of there because they had the kilns down there on Curran Avenue [Liddle Avenue], I think it is, off Amboy Avenue.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, yes, the Clara Barton section.

T. Haas: Right, yes, and they did that. And I remember him telling me that he did the Capitol, he was doing the railroad station, and I think he did—I'm not sure—he was going to do one of the stations in Philly [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania], but I wasn't sure. But I know he did the Baltimore [Station] and the Capitol.

P. Boeddinghaus: He has a wonderful display here in the library, the one wall downstairs he did with the sample pieces of his work. And I'm pleased to say I have two pieces: a vase and a lamp. Remember when he had the lamp shop [on Station Place]?

T. Haas: Yeah, right in Metuchen. Yeah, next to the cab company [Metuchen Taxi Service, Inc. at 3 Pennsylvania Avenue], yeah. When I remember that, I always remember I was just starting in the post office and Frank Zunino started me saving money and we used to go to Metuchen Savings and Loan every payday and put ten dollars in.

P. Boeddinghaus: And that was on Penn [Pennsylvania] Avenue also?

T. Haas: Yeah, that was the old Metuchen Savings and Loan [at 5 Pennsylvania Avenue]. Mr. [Harold] Logan [at 43 Linden Avenue] and Mrs. [Faith] Inglis, who lived on Carson Avenue (51 Carson), she was in there. The two of them sat there and it was the Savings and Loan, you'd give ten dollars every pay and build it up. It was interesting.

⁸ Francis Joseph von Tury (1901-1992) was a well-known ceramist, designer, and craftsman. Born in Hungary, he immigrated to the United States in 1929 and established his own studio in Perth Amboy by 1936. During this period, von Tury conducted research for improving the ceramic body, glaze, color, and design of high-fired porcelain art ware. He also had studios in Metuchen and Edison.

But I remember the other things on Main Street. Now you went to Gort's, then after that there was Elizabethtown [Consolidated] Gas Company [at 454 Main Street] and then the Elizabethtown Gas Company built on where Meeting Place [phonetic] is now. Then there was a field where the bank is now. And there was the old Metuchen Sweet Shop [at 438 Main Street] where all the schools used to meet and that's what made Metuchen so good because you had kids from St. Mary's, St. Peter's, Rutgers Prep, Vocational, and Metuchen High [School]. And they could all go and they all seemed to have fun. They all went to school different; it was a rivalry, but it wasn't a hate rivalry. They used to have a lot of fun going into Metuchen Sweet Shop.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, some of the students came from outlying areas. We had students in Metuchen from Bonhamtown, Iselin, and Menlo [Park], and Arbor, and New Market. And out through Highland Park, we had the high school, the center for teens.

T. Haas: Right, North Edison. And I remember going in there and Dervech's used to have it.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yeah, I remember that name.

T. Haas: [Serafem] Dervech's [Metuchen Delicatessen Store at 430 Main Street]. And then the son opened up a place on Lake Avenue, Al's Sweet Shop, Al Dervech [Alex Dervech], and they had it for years. I remember that. And then after that came, at that time, was the old Metuchen Delicatessen & Liquor, Liquor & Delicatessen, where it used to be in there [at 422 Main Street]. It burned out.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, I remember the fire, yes. Do you remember when the California [Fruit] Market was along in there too, the Zuts brothers?

T. Haas: The Zuts. I remember the California because I can remember my father say, "They had such a good business. Why would they want to go into clothing?"

P. Boeddinghaus: Clothing in a department store.

T. Haas: Yeah. But I remember backing up from there, then came the fish market.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, the fish market. Yes.

T. Haas: The Metuchen Fish Market [Metuchen Sea Food Market at 428 Main Street]. Now you could leave your order and have a pound of filet.

P. Boeddinghaus: They had cooked fish.

T. Haas: Cooked fish you could pick up. Yeah, that's what the big thing was there. Then after that, I remember the bakery. It used to be called Rudy's [Bake Shoppe at 426 Main Street]. But before that during the Second World War, I remember that the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] or whatnot confiscated—they were German people that ran it—and they confiscated radios in the ovens. I remember that.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, that was at the bakery and not at the Metuchen Inn? [laughs]

T. Haas: No, no, no. Yeah, I remember that at the bakery there. And then there came the California Fruit Market [at 428 Main Street]. And then eventually when the fire was up the street, the Metuchen Delicatessen & Liquor moved to Joe Basile's Meat Market [at 422 Main Street] that used to be there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh yes, I remember him.

T. Haas: Joe Basile. And then next to that where the California Fruit Market used to be, then they made that the Metuchen Sweet Shop for a while. Okay. And then Marmax [Shoes at 424 Main Street] came in, the shoe store. Then you go down–

P. Boeddinghaus: Across Hillside Avenue. And then what was on the corner? Main and Hillside?

T. Haas: [Sol] Friedman's [Jersey] 5 & 10 [Cent Store at 420 Main Street]. Then there was another bakery years ago, then there was Costa's Ice Cream [at 416 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: I want to tell you about that. I worked there from high school. I'd run over at lunchtime and the kids would bring their sandwiches and I'd fix these crazy mixtures of lime, cherry, chocolate, coke. And the kids would just buy a drink and they'd eat their lunch there. And I worked there (John Kalkanis); I worked there [at] noontime and then after school. I worked at The Chocolate Shop [at] 416 Main Street], and that was Costa's Ice Cream originally.

T. Haas: Costa's was originally there, right. And then from there I went down to–the next one was a barbershop; I can't think of the name of it. And then after that came Wernik's [Pharmacy at 412 Main Street], okay. Then after that came Seldow's [Stationary at 410 Main Street], and next to Seldow's was Joe's Barber Shop [at 408 Main Street]. Next to that was the Metuchen National Bank [at 404-406 Main Street]. And then from Metuchen National Bank, it used to be New York Cleaners [New York Tailoring Company at 402 Main Street] run by Max Salomone [Ralph Salomone].

P. Boeddinghaus: I remember Salomone, yes.

T. Haas: Right, and then after that was Metuchen Center [at 400 Main Street]. And then after that was the firehouse [Eagle Hook & Ladder Company at 398 Main Street] and there was Burroughs [Metuchen Pharmacy at 396 Main Street] on the corner of Penn [Pennsylvania Avenue]. And Burroughs Drug Store, Dr. [Edward Allen] Burroughs [Jr.], yeah, I remember.

P. Boeddinghaus: You know his sister, [Mary] Ruth [Burroughs] Eby, is still living and I visit her at the Reformed Church Home up in Irvington and she tells wonderful stories. I've taped her for my own personal [collection]. And we write letters back and forth because she will not have a telephone. That brings us up then to the railroad station.

T. Haas: Yeah, the railroad station where my father lived–worked, worked, worked! [chuckles] But upstairs, there was an apartment. I remember people lived there and they worked. And a girl was, like my father, a ticket agent in Elizabeth and whatnot. And the other story was that years ago (this is when they had steam

engines, not the electric) that the fellow who worked there at the railroad station didn't have a clock and the train at five in the morning used to go through and blow his whistle and that was his alarm clock to wake him up to go to work years ago. But I remember at the railroad station; a lot of times, my father working during the war [World War II]. He worked nine to twelve. He worked with George Irons in the Railway Express [Agency, Inc.] on [7] Pennsylvania Avenue and then from three to midnight, or later during the war, he would work at the railroad station working for the Pennsylvania Railroad at the time. And then he was in charge of all the freight trains, all the freight cars coming in and out of Raritan Arsenal, the ammunition. And he had to be investigated because he had a German name. And he came home a couple of times and most unusual when you lived in the Radio Section to see a car parked on the street, but we just surmised that it was probably FBI just tracing him to go home. And it lasted maybe about a month, but odd hours there'd be a car parked up the corner on Main and [West] Chestnut across because that was a field where 621 Main Street was. It was just odd a car was parked there out of nowhere, but it would be gone in the morning. But my father would come home at like twelve-thirty at night, walk home. And the other thing my father would do was, Second World War, was a lot of the girls who went to St. Peter's [High School in New Brunswick] used to go to dances and when they came home at midnight, he would walk them home up the Griffins up at [47] Highland Avenue and the Schulers up at [160] East Chestnut. He would walk down with them and then walk them home when they get off the train at night.

P. Boeddinghaus: Escort them. Yeah, that's nice.

T. Haas: Like escort them, yeah, yeah. I remember them telling, "Your father used to walk us home, make sure we got home with no problem." And she said, "We used to come from St. Peter's on the dancing and be on a late train coming home," and whatnot.

P. Boeddinghaus: Let's cross over Main Street now, like where Geri Blyer's Dance Studio is now, was that a feed store?

T. Haas: That was a field, the field. And a feed store was back of it. I can't think of the name. It began with a B [Hugo Burggaller at 389 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: It escapes me also.

T. Haas: But that was there. It was set way back in and then came Middlesex Hardware Store [at 395 Main Street] run by [Edward J.] Drake's. It was Drake's at Middlesex and then there was—upstairs was Dr. [Jacob] Kornblatt's office [at 397 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: The dentist.

T. Haas: And then next to it, I don't remember this but Hailey's [phonetic], I think, used to have a restaurant there. Then I remember it as the Sunnyside [Luncheonette at 399 Main Street] run by Max [Bayuk] and I don't know his wife; they were very, very good. Then it became Tom and Jerry's, he bought it from Max, or Tom and

Maria's, and then they moved to Edison at the Colonial Village. And then it became a pizza place, I think.

P. Boeddinghaus: It was a restaurant for a while. We used to eat there a lot. It was handy and they had good food.

T. Haas: **Yeah, when Max's had [it]. Then Metuchen Hardware [at 401 Main Street], then the next thing was a building, the Schenk [Real Estate] Agency and [Lawyer Sherwood] Mundy [at 405 Main Street]. [recording paused]**

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

T. Haas: **The other one I remember was the next building was The Greek's on the corner of New Street and Main. And I remember walking down in the mornings, I used to meet Lundy Bloomfield there, we'd have coffee and a hard roll before we went to work. And the police sergeant would always take his break. It would be either Charlie Frohm or "Gus" Manziano [Costen A. Manziano] in there and Lundy had a way of finding out what happened overnight from them while we were there. [laughs] And I remember the Greek fellow who owned it. I don't know his name, but remember I always thought he was a hard worker. He loved the fish, and he would fish all night and come in at four in the morning and work right straight through for the day. And he had rooms upstairs. And for men who were living upstairs, or any men who would come in buy the meal every day, he had cards and I think after ten meals you got a free meal. And they would come in with the card, and they'd get punched, and then you'd get a free meal for coming in. And then across the street, what I remember, on the corner of New and Main Street was Joe Fischer's [at 425 Main Street].**

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes. Appliances, radios.

T. Haas: **And televisions, I remember. Because when televisions came out, the kids used to go down like at five o'clock at night and see the cartoons and *Howdy Doody* and all. But then Friday night used to be a big crowd (all grown-ups), they used to see the boxing matches on and used to stand all out in front. And when you think back, he had to stay open until eleven o'clock so we could see the boxing matches.**

P. Boeddinghaus: And hope to sell a TV [television].

T. Haas: **And sell a TV. But we used to sit there and watch and there'd be maybe fifty or sixty people watching the boxing matches.**

P. Boeddinghaus: So like was that in the early fifties, you say, or mid-fifties?

T. Haas: **I can say it was the late forties. Yeah, right, I would say the late forties, [19]47, [19]48 when television came out, [19]49. Because people didn't have it because we got our first television about [19]51 so it was dying out then. But it was like in the early forties, that was the big thing, go down, "Let's go down to a meet." You could always tell mom you're going to Fischer's to watch the fights. [laughs] We**

always used to go there. And next to Joe Fischer's, I remember, was [Nathan] Loomar's [at 427 Main Street], I think.

P. Boeddinghaus: Loomar, like clothing and dry goods. I remember that too.

T. Haas: Right. And then next to him was the A&P [at 429 Main Street]. And then next to the A&P, I could remember it was either Littlefield [phonetic] and then it was Joe Alessi's Shoe Store [at 431 Main Street] and the Chinese laundry [Leon Chin Laundry at 431 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, yes, yes.

T. Haas: Remember that? Okay, from there, the next thing was Dessel's [at 433 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: Okay. I remember when Dessel's were on Main Street, produce and canned goods.

T. Haas: Right. Going back on the other side of Main Street, next to Burroughs, before Burroughs was the firehouse [Eagle Hook & Ladder Company]. I don't know if I mentioned that or not; I forgot that. And that's where Dessel's went from there, Main Street down to the old firehouse, and then they brought in meat and that brought in more customers because they didn't have meat when they were at 433 Main Street.

P. Boeddinghaus: They used to deliver too. That helped my family a lot that we would go in and pick out the order and then they would deliver it later.

T. Haas: Same thing. My mother used to call all the time. My mother, I think, was never in the store on Main Street. She'd call all the time and take the order, and from there, they would deliver it. My father would pay them once a month. She would tell them what kind of meat they want; they would pick it out, send it. It was always good.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, they were always very reputable.

T. Haas: Yeah. And when they were on Main Street, [they] were strictly a produce and whatnot. That was 433 [Main Street] and after that, Andy Sheehy [Andrew Sheehy] came in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: What did he have? I forget.

T. Haas: He had a little restaurant, soda store, yeah. Sheehy's, yeah.

P. Boeddinghaus: Now we're coming up to Kramer's [Department Store]? Are we up to Kramer's yet?

T. Haas: No, not yet. And next to it was Mrs. Bond's Gift Shop [phonetic] [at 435 Main Street] and in there—why that was so popular was they had a Motor Vehicle [Registration] Agency in there. Okay, and that was there. And then it became Home Towne Furniture [Company] and now it's the Chinese restaurant. Okay, then after that came Culver's Meat Market [phonetic].

P. Boeddinghaus: I remember Culver's [phonetic] too. They were very good to my family.

T. Haas: Yeah, Culver's [phonetic] and there was another man in there. I can't think of the other name. It was Culver's [phonetic] and–

P. Boeddinghaus: It was a Scandinavian name like–

T. Haas: Right, they were in there, like partners in there. And then after that came Kramer's Department Store [at 441 Main Street], and then it was called Kahn's [Department Store]. That was in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: They had everything. They had dry goods and clothing and shoes and curtains.

T. Haas: And you mentioned Kramer's. I remember in the summertime, Metuchen used to close down on Wednesday afternoons, a half a day on Wednesday they were always closed. After that came 447 Main Street, which was at that time used to be appliance store—I can't think of the—Hubble's! Hubble's Appliance. And Bill Storts [William Storts], who was a son-in-law of Costa's Ice Cream, he bought it out and then he eventually moved it from there to 416 Main Street where Costa's Ice Cream place was.

P. Boeddinghaus: The old Chocolate Shop.

T. Haas: Right. And Bill eventually got out of the appliance at 416 [Main Street] and went into a gift shop and they called it the Contessa.

P. Boeddinghaus: Beautiful things, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. He was in that.

P. Boeddinghaus: At 416 Main, um-hm. What was along after Hubble's then?

T. Haas: Hubble's, I don't know what other store is there. I think it was a little field; there was a house in there. There were a couple of apartments up there because Max Andrews lived in it. And they tore it down and that's where you have all the Beneficial [Finance Company at 447 Main Street] now, and the shoe store, and the Jewish deli.

P. Boeddinghaus: The Vitamin Store.

T. Haas: Yeah. But I remember when I delivered mail, where the jewelry shop [The Jewel Shop] is now, that used to be—I can't think of his name—but he had a men's shop in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Korby. Korby's Men's Shop [at 451 Main Street].

T. Haas: And it was Copperfield's father, [magician] David Copperfield's father. Yeah, I remember going in–

P. Boeddinghaus: Mr. [Hyman] Kotkin.

T. Haas: **Kotkin. Right, that's his name, yeah. I remember going in there delivering and next to him was Grace Roth Lingerie [Shop at 455 Main Street].**

P. Boeddinghaus: Lingerie, yes.

T. Haas: **Yes, she was in there and Beneficial was down there.**

P. Boeddinghaus: Wasn't there an old butcher shop, Roy Kohn?

T. Haas: **Kohn [at 465 Main Street] was further down. Next to those buildings, where the bicycle shop is now, used to be called Supreme Market [Metuchen Superette Market at 457 Main Street] and that was the Grieb's. And next to the Grieb's was Dickinson's Men's Shop [at 459 Main Street]. Okay, then there was Dr. [Clarence] Hofer's office [at] 463 Main Street. Then next to that was Kohn's. And next to Kohn's was Paramount [Shoe Rebuilding & Dry] Cleaners [at 467 Main Street], which was Al Salomone, and he fixed shoes. And then after that was the [Centenary] Methodist [Episcopal] Church and you're at Main and Middlesex [Avenue] now.**

P. Boeddinghaus: I'd just like to back up to Kohn's Meat Market. My mother worked so I had to do the marketing and deal with those ration coupons during the war and get in line at Roy Kohn's with my token and coupon book or whatever. And I was very young, I was probably sixteen or so, trying to do some marketing for my mother and wait in line, stand in sawdust, and get some meat for the family.

T. Haas: **Right. Yeah, Mr. Kohn. We never went in Kohn's. I don't know why, but we never did. Kohn's or Culver's [phonetic] or Supreme where Pete Grieb was. We always went down to Shapiro's. That was easier for my mother to walk to Durham Avenue, and then you'd go in there, and my mother just got meat—**

P. Boeddinghaus: For the day.

T. Haas: **For the day or for like two days, that's all. It wasn't nothing big. Because at that time at home, we were one of the few people, we never had an electric refrigerator until 1982. We always had a gas refrigerator and we had a small one up until 1963 and then we got a bigger one with a freezer. But that stayed until 1982. And that was the first electric refrigerator we had. But it was always the gas. My father liked gas; we had a gas stove, gas heat, gas refrigerator. But like you say, the refrigerators were small. Those freezers were only big enough for trays in those days.**

P. Boeddinghaus: For ice cubes.

T. Haas: **Yeah, it was just a refrigerator. But we used to go to Shapiro's all the time and the oldest [Carmella] Altavilla girl lived down the street on 134-138 Durham Avenue, she used to work there. Yeah, she was in high school, grammar school; she used to work there.**

P. Boeddinghaus: At Shapiro's?

T. Haas: At Shapiro's, yup. And Mr. and Mrs. [Isadore] Shapiro, I think they had a daughter who lives over on the Twentieth Century. I can't think of her name, she lives on Hollywood Avenue. Yeah, they [his parents] went there and you always had good fresh meat. It wasn't too bad for my parents because we had four boys.

P. Boeddinghaus: You had four boys in your family?

T. Haas: Yeah. We had six in the family so you had the coupons. We had enough; you could have a nice meal. But like when we went to visit my relatives in South Jersey, my aunts and my grandfather and grandmother, they only had two and the other one had three. They would say, "Wait a month or two until we've lost one so we can get something to eat." [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: Put a meal together, ration foods.

T. Haas: Yeah, because the food, meat was rationed. You were only allowed one bar of soap. Sugar was another thing we used to have rationed.

P. Boeddinghaus: Toilet paper was rationed, paper goods, yeah. It's interesting how you live through all that and go on to something else.

T. Haas: I remember being at home at 114 West Chestnut on Saturday nights. We all had to go downstairs, polish your shoes, and then come up and take a bath and then we would all sit down and listen to the "Top Ten of the Week" with Lucky Strike's [cigarette sponsor] on the radio, yup. And then after that, we went to bed. You know that's how it was, you'd always polish your shoes, and then you went and you took a bath and then you listen to the radio, the music "Top Ten," and then we went to bed.

P. Boeddinghaus: So you had a routine?

T. Haas: Yeah right, on Saturday nights, yeah.

P. Boeddinghaus: It sounds like you enjoyed growing up around here.

T. Haas: Oh yeah, I enjoyed Metuchen very much. The people were always nice and everything.

P. Boeddinghaus: What else do you have on your notes there?

T. Haas: Oh, let's see there, Metuchen Station.

P. Boeddinghaus: I was going to mention, did you remember the diner at Main and Middlesex [called] Oakes [Metuchen] Diner [at 528 Middlesex Avenue]?

T. Haas: Oakes Diner, Harry Oakes. And Harry always used to say, "What'll you have today, sir?" You know that was his saying. [laughs] And his wife always used to make the meatloaf.

P. Boeddinghaus: Jack [Boeddinghaus, husband] loved that meatloaf. [laughs]

T. Haas: Yeah. He used to come in about nine-thirty with it and he would have two big meatloaves and yeah, he would say, and George, his son. And we used to go there an awful lot. Like we would come home from football games because I (we) went to St. Peter's [High School] and we used to play in New Brunswick. And we'd come home Friday night, and we'd go down to the diner and we'd all sit there and talk [until] midnight so we could have our hamburger after midnight. [laughs] We would order it about ten of [midnight] and by the time Axel—there was a cook there for years whose name we called him Axel. I don't know why we called him Axel, but we called him that. He lived over on New Street; his name was Engels [phonetic].

P. Boeddinghaus: Axel Engels [phonetic]? [laughs]

T. Haas: Yeah, I think it was. We nicknamed him Axel. But he would put on the hamburgers and we would go out and have hamburgers and coffee. And for some reason, we used to meet the kids from Iselin, the guys that went to Woodbridge, we would have camaraderie in there with them over the years. We always used to meet on Friday night. For some reason, we used to go do the same thing with dances, getting off the train. We would go down there and go to the old Metuchen Diner. And even when I was a letter carrier, I used to stop there and eat. You know the rest of the places were open, but I would stop there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Had a favorite spot.

T. Haas: Yeah, a favorite spot. We would eat there at the diner. And next door was the Olivers [who] lived there [at 542 Middlesex Avenue] and that was the icehouse. And then I remember the [Loyal T.] Ives [Company at 544-550 Middlesex Avenue], the needle place next door and Husseys lived in the back. And then you go down 558 [Middlesex Avenue], I don't know who lived there at the time, but then it was Ray Herb's. Then [for] years, it was Herb's Real Estate and then after that was Bates Insurance Company (Freddy Bates Insurance Company) [at 560 Middlesex Avenue]; he lived on [24] Williams Street [unclear].

P. Boeddinghaus: Do you remember when [J. Lloyd] Grimstead lived along there?

T. Haas: And Grimstead lived next door [at 576 Middlesex Avenue]. I delivered mail to Mr. Grimstead. And then the Martins lived at 586 and then the store, Martin's Candy Store.

P. Boeddinghaus: They had the candy store. We would go over from Franklin School and buy cookies and candy for lunch and so forth.

T. Haas: And I remember another thing when I was a kid. One time the carnival came to Metuchen, that was a big thrill. And Mr. [Howard] Molineux was our Bond Bread bakery man, who lived on [29] Washington Place, and I remember seeing him working. I don't know what organization ran the carnival, but where the Culinary Restaurant [phonetic] is and the A&P [along Pearl Street], that's where they had it, in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: That was a big field in there.

T. Haas: In the big field. And they had it just that once and I think the police chief said it brought in the wrong type people and they never had it again. So that was the other thing I remember. And I remember seeing Mr. (the Bond Bread bakery man) without a uniform, I should say. [laughs] I couldn't believe I saw him without a uniform! [laughter]

But the other thing, you know you're bringing up things that I remember as a kid, I remember Father [Joseph] Sheehan at St. Francis [Cathedral], [he] used to bring in, have the boxing matches at Franklin School and he used to bring the kids in from [St. Francis] Xavier [Church] in Brooklyn, the CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] in Brooklyn, Long Branch CYO. And the big thing was we had Charlie Butler⁹ in Metuchen. Do you remember Charlie? He fought in the Golden Gloves. He was our savior. And when it [boxing] was getting quite popular, from what I heard, [unclear] Monsignor [John] Foley [at St. Francis Cathedral], said he was afraid of the wrong element was coming into the town. It was only kids boxing (high school kids boxing), but he thought it was wrong because [Joe] Walcott came a couple of times as guest, Jersey Joe Walcott¹⁰, I remember. And we used to go down to Franklin School at the gym with Father Sheehan; he used to be at station in law—he was from Brooklyn so he knew the CYO there and he knew Xavier and they'd bring their boxing match in and Long Branch group, and he had Metuchen and they would match them up with the different ones. That was the big thing. I would say right after the war, [19]46, [19]47, [19]48, that was the big boxing matches we used to have down there, now at Franklin School.

P. Boeddinghaus: You're doing good here, Ted.

T. Haas: But where on Middlesex Avenue, where you got now, the only thing I remember there was the two houses behind the Methodist Church was Breen's, Jim Breen's [James Breen at 541 Middlesex Avenue], and then people by the name of—the daughter was named Stonaker.

P. Boeddinghaus: I remember that name from town.

T. Haas: Yeah, now Stonakers used to live at 407 Middlesex Avenue where they have the [Dr. Ralph] Brancale's [office]. They sold it to the State. They used to own the Middlesex Nursing Home [at 34 Middlesex Avenue], which nobody knows and that's where the Commonwealth Bank is now on Middlesex Avenue. They used to have the Middlesex Nursing Home, it was called, and that was up there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Do you remember Ramble Inn [at 36 Middlesex Avenue] and the Littersts?

T. Haas: The Littersts and Ramble Inn, I remember delivering mail to the two ladies [Elizabeth and Louise Litterst] in there all the time.

⁹ Charles Lee Butler was a Metuchen native that spent his formative years boxing at the Metuchen YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]. In 1951, Mr. Butler lost a controversial decision to become the Eastern boxing champion of the Golden Gloves tournament; this controversial match became local news in Metuchen. Mr. Butler later became the 1952 All-Navy light heavyweight boxing champion while serving in the Navy during the Korean War.

¹⁰ Jersey Joe Walcott (legal name Arnold Raymond Cream) was an American professional boxer who held the world heavyweight title from 1951 to 1952.

P. Boeddinghaus: They've done a tape; it's very interesting.

T. Haas: Yeah. They were very good.

P. Boeddinghaus: How about the Metuchen Inn [at 424 Middlesex Avenue]?

T. Haas: Metuchen Inn, I just remember delivering mail there over the years and [former owner] Mr. [Paul] Dorf.

P. Boeddinghaus: Much activity there or--?

T. Haas: The only thing I remember, he used to say he had a "select clientele." [laughs] That's all I remember of him. But it was quite well known before they opened up the liquor license, where they're bringing a lot of foreign beer and whatnot in the 1980s when [Governor Thomas] Kean came in and did a [unclear]. A lot of rich people used to go to him to get foreign beer. He used to have like exclusive rights for foreign beer and that's why they used to go to him to get beer there. The only person I ever remember that used to live there was Tom Penderville [Thomas Penderville]. And Tom Penderville was a man who was a section boss on the railroad, and he worked with my father. Tom Penderville, and he retired, I guess, in the [19]50s, but he was well known. He used to live with the Griffins on Highland Avenue years ago. He was a single guy. But on his day off, he would ride the trains where they worked to see if the train would shake too much or it would bounce too much. He would go and if it did, then he'd have the gang out there and they would work it over again, my father said. I remember Tom Penderville for years when I was a kid. He'd down there, sat with my father, and he just sat and watched the trains go by. That was his pleasure. But he was noted to ride the trains where they worked the week before to see if the train would shake too much, bump too much. He would go have the men go back. He was the section foreman on the trains then. But that's the only person I ever know who was in the Metuchen Inn, but he--

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah. Well, Mr. Dorf did a tape years ago and he claims he had a lot of famous guests like Henry Ford, Arthur Treacher, Ed Sullivan.

T. Haas: Speaking of the Metuchen Inn, the person who used to tell me the most about it was Lundy Bloomfield. And Lundy said that back in [19]30s and [19]20s, it was owned by German people and they used to have gardens outside and it was quite a well-known place for eating and drinking and have a good time. It was a German place and he said the food was very good in the [19]20s and the [19]30s when Lundy was younger.

P. Boeddinghaus: And [Metuchen] Rotary [Club] used to meet there. It was a well-known meeting place.

T. Haas: Yes.

P. Boeddinghaus: And you know who cooked there too was Mrs. [Katherine] Schveninger.

T. Haas: Okay, yes. I know her from [52] East Walnut, yes.

P. Boeddinghaus: She did a tape and she tells how she cooked, was the chef there, and the men loved her soup and her different German dishes. By the way, she just went into a nursing home. She was in Metuchen Senior Citizen Apartments [at 35 Lincoln Avenue] for a couple of years now.

T. Haas: I remember her though before she went into the Senior Citizens [Apartments]. I remember her on East Walnut Street, 48 East Walnut delivering mail to her.

P. Boeddinghaus: You have a terrific memory about addresses and names and places. That's wonderful.

T. Haas: You know over the years meeting the people and talking to them, [I] was quite interested in the people. I think I remember most was Aylin Pierson because he was so tough, tough talking, you know very—

P. Boeddinghaus: Now what was the first name?

T. Haas: Aylin Pierson.

P. Boeddinghaus: Was he an architect?

T. Haas: Yeah. And where the [St. Francis] rectory is now, that's where his house was [at 32 Elm Avenue]. And if you go behind the rectory and behind the houses on Library Place, you will see a big brick wall and that brick wall used to come all the way out the library and go where the convent is all the way up to the house there and all the way back and that was his gardens all back in there. And I remember that as a kid. But he was well-known architect and I remember delivering mail to him at 201 Maple Avenue. That was his office, Aylin. It was called Pierson & MacWilliam [Architects] and it seemed unusual looking back having a business in a residential area. But he built them three houses, 193 [Maple], 197 [Maple], and in that, and from what I understand, 160 Maple Avenue, he built that especially for his sister.

P. Boeddinghaus: That kind of long, narrow ranch [house] that runs back. Yes, I know that house.

T. Haas: Right, and he built that for her. That's what I understood over the years. And the other thing he built was on Woodwild Terrace, the duplexes. They're brick; he built them, from what I understand. He built them. But he was quite known as an architect. Mr. [John] MacWilliam was like the other side, very calm, very sharp, yeah, because he used to bring in a lot of the [St. Francis] Catholic Church. I know the architect who did St. Francis, but he did a lot for the Diocese of Trenton, Mr. MacWilliam did.

P. Boeddinghaus: Do you remember Mr. [Clement] Fairweather, the architect?

T. Haas: Yeah, Mr. Fairweather, yes, yup. I remember him. He wore the white shirt with the old type, you know like a collar up, like you would wear for a—

P. Boeddinghaus: A formal occasion?

T. Haas: Formal occasion all the time.

P. Boeddinghaus: He always dressed up.

T. Haas: And Mrs. Fairweather, her sister I knew from stopping at the post office buying stamps. She would come in from England. She was from England. Her name was Mrs. Goose; her last name was Goose. Yeah, it was funny. [laughs]

P. Boeddinghaus: So let's see, you had a walking route like south, this north end? Did you walk the north end of Metuchen?

T. Haas: I walked all of Metuchen, different places in Metuchen. I remember when I started delivering mail in 1953 on, like going up Daniels Hill on Hillside Avenue, you didn't go through Hillside Avenue. You went up to the hill and around the back was [Arthur] Gibbs [at 171 Hillside Avenue]. Remember they owned the furniture store [Gibbs Furniture Company]?

P. Boeddinghaus: In New Brunswick, um-hm.

T. Haas: Yeah. When you go up the corner of Rayle Court and Hillside, they used to have RFD boxes and they used to put that in there. Daniels, the people lived up on the hill there, Ruth—

P. Boeddinghaus: Eby? Ruth Eby?

T. Haas: No. Inglis? Oh, Ruth Leis. You know Leis?

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, Ray Leis [Raymond Leis].

T. Haas: Yeah, she lived up there. Her name was Inglis, I think. Inglis? Yeah. They lived up on top of the hill [at 161 Hillside Avenue] and there was an apartment and you get it—you had to walk up like thirty, forty steps up to the top of the hill and that was called Daniels Hill there. And the kids, a lot of kids, used to sleigh ride there. And then I guess when [Philip] Ruegger [Jr.] built in there and Mayos built in there and Feddersons [phonetic] moved in, they broke in Rayle Court. But we would go as far as Feddersons [phonetic], but Gibbs and them were the mail RFD boxes out at Hillside Avenue, we used to deliver. Then we used to go down and we'd do Highland Avenue, and Grove Avenue wasn't cut through yet. And we used to go down Dellwood [Road]. I used to go down Grove and then Woodside Avenue, we would go to [James] Gallagher's [at 37 Woodside Avenue], that was it. There was no Beacon Hill or nothing and we used to cut through the woods over to 175— yeah, 175—Griffiths [phonetic] used to live there on Middlesex [Avenue].

P. Boeddinghaus: Middlesex.

T. Haas: Middlesex up there. The Stillwells [phonetic] lived up in the house up there that used to be called 223, but I think it faces really now, they got it facing Woodside Avenue. But they had a post office box back then, delivered mail in there to them.

P. Boeddinghaus: I heard that Rayle Court was named for Ray Leis, who was in real estate around Metuchen, and perhaps he developed that area. And it was named after him, Ray Leis.

- T. Haas:** It could be. I don't know but Ruegger could probably tell you because I think Ruegger just got into construction there; he did that. He did the Clive Hills or Northview Acres, then he did Beacon Hill Drive, was a big thing up there.
- P. Boeddinghaus: So you watched that all develop?
- T. Haas:** Oh yeah. Because with Beacon Hill Drive, we used to go up there on scavenger hunts as Boy Scouts. They used to have the beacon going all the time up there. We used to go up like across from Beverly Court and walk up there. There was a path going up the hill all the way up and then there was a sharp cliff on the other side of the railroad [Pennsylvania Railroad].
- P. Boeddinghaus: The guys used to do some hunting up there for rabbit and pheasant when it was undeveloped, yeah. So when did you go inside?
- T. Haas:** I went inside after I came back from the Korean War, or not the Korean War, but when I was in Korea in the service for two years, from [19]58 to 1960. And we went inside.
- P. Boeddinghaus: Were you in the Army or the Navy?
- T. Haas:** I was in the Army for two years, drafted. I was twenty-three [years old], got out at twenty-five. I got out in May 1960 and that's when they made me a regular and they made me a clerk and that's when I started inside [the post office].
- P. Boeddinghaus: Now did you deliver up south end?
- T. Haas:** I delivered to the south end of Main Street.
- P. Boeddinghaus: You know because I always like to hear more about the south end. There's very little on tape about the south end.
- T. Haas:** Yeah. Well, what I remember of south end is going down, I remember, Perri's [Confectionery & Delicatessen at 214 Main Street], the New York Barber Shop [at 216 Main Street], and then I remember Garden State [Super Market at 203 Main Street], the Roxy—
- P. Boeddinghaus: Cleaners.
- T. Haas:** The cleaners [at 207 Main Street]; then there was a [Ziegler's] Texaco Station [at 188 Main Street] on the left.
- P. Boeddinghaus: I've interviewed Richard Ziegler.
- T. Haas:** Ziegler, right. And then next was your Jack's Flower Shop [at 184 Main Street]. Next to him was Danburrows [phonetic], I think it was.
- P. Boeddinghaus: Danburt's Meat Market [at 180 Main Street].
- T. Haas:** Market, right. I remember that. I think that is where the old A&P used to be.

P. Boeddinghaus: There was an A&P up that end, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah, and I think that's where it was. And then next to that, well there's a new building, it was more like a field, then came Ochs.

P. Boeddinghaus: Ochs Sweet Shop [at 176 Main Street].

T. Haas: Shop, right. And then came Schwalje's [Plumbing at 174 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: The plumbing.

T. Haas: The plumping supply. That was their main headquarters. That was a big—they were a tremendous big outfit really there.

P. Boeddinghaus: The dad [Nicholas Schwalje] started it with neighborhood work, furnaces and stoves, and stuff like that.

T. Haas: Yeah, and then they went and built all of Camp Kilmer and then they deactivated Camp Kilmer. And then there was, the Korean War came on and then they activated it. You know so they were in Camp Kilmer quite a lot. But they really became very big because Phil and George, the sons, were the ones that really, were the ones pushing it. The father wanted it, would like ride around in just a little pick-up truck and take care of the neighbors and that's it.

P. Boeddinghaus: Hot water tanks and gas stoves and stuff. Yeah, I remember that.

T. Haas: Then after that came the Middlesex Cycle [Company at 156 Main Street], the [John] Tagliaboschi's [Motorcycles].

P. Boeddinghaus: The motorcycle shop, yes.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. And the other thing I remember now at 170 [Main] is the cleaners. It used to be cleaners in there, Toman's Cleaners.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, I dealt there. And do you remember when that was a laundromat too?

T. Haas: Yes, I remember that laundromat.

P. Boeddinghaus: Don Surpluss had the laundromat. I used that a lot for washing and drying.

T. Haas: Yeah, right. And then after that you go down—

P. Boeddinghaus: How about the bar on the corner? [Joseph] Torio's [Metuchen Grill at 154 Main Street]. Were you going to say that? [laughs]

T. Haas: Yeah. Torio's is what I remember. And then I can't remember what was—oh, there was like a candy store or something at 150 where the custom frame place is.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yeah, I can't think of that name. It started with a G.

T. Haas: And then next to that was—

P. Boeddinghaus: [Michael] Gondola's.

T. Haas: Right, Gondola's, right. And then after that was Ronnan's [phonetic] house, they lived there. And then after that was a field and that's all I remember of businesses. And across the street was Van Vechten Press [at 157 Main Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: The print shop.

T. Haas: The print shop. That was the only the print shop on that side. Then you came all the way up and then there was like an old gas station. The gas station just was there. It was a vacant lot for years and years, and then it was a gas station in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well, Johnny Shersick had a gas station [Metuchen Cities Service Station at 199 Main Street], but there was somebody before him. Charlie Goforth, maybe? No, that's years ago.

T. Haas: Yeah, Goforth's used to have on the corner of Amboy and Main where McPherson's [phonetic] is, that was Goforth's. And then he had a garage next to it and he used to have Thomason [phonetic] bread in there. Okay, yeah that's weird. And Buddy Poulsen used to work for him in there. And then Buddy opened his place [Poulsen's Service Station] down on Lake Avenue (261 Lake).

P. Boeddinghaus: Did you ever hear the story about the Forum Theatre [at 314-316 Main Street], how it got its name? There was a movie house [Metuchen Theatre] on Highland and Main, that used to be the movies. And the two men that had it were James Forgione and another name was [Henry] Rumler. They built the Forum Theatre and they said, "What are we going to name it?" And they had a contest. They came up with "Fo-rum," "For" for Forgione and the "rum" for Rumler. You know who told me that? Warren Breen told me that story.

T. Haas: Oh yeah? Warren was a big one on that. The only other thing I remember, I remember Inn Place, delivering mail there. The Inn Place and the proper person there at that time was Suzy Parker [Cecilia Ann Renee Parker].

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, what was she? A model?

T. Haas: A model for Revlon. And her sister was there and then her other sister was Boyce, they lived there, Boyce lived there. Then they moved up and they built the house at 124 Hillside, which Jeney (Marjorie Jeney) bought after there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Across from Jack's parent's home [Charles Boeddinghaus at 125 Hillside Avenue].

T. Haas: Right, yeah. But I remember that was the biggest name; you know Suzy Parker in the [19]50s with Revlon, she was the top model for them. And her sister [Dorian Leigh Parker], I can't think—she went under like a French name and she went in there.

P. Boeddinghaus: Was her name Carlotta?

T. Haas: No, no. She was like in the [19]40s with Revlon, then it was Suzy Parker. And that was the big thing, you know they came from Metuchen.

P. Boeddinghaus: We have a lot of well-known people from Metuchen.

T. Haas: Yeah, and from what I understand Inn Place was called Inn Place because of the Checkes. Harry Checke [at 21 Central Avenue] told me that his father or his grandfather, that used to be a restaurant and an inn up there and that's how it became Inn Place up on the hill.

P. Boeddinghaus: There was a nice big hotel [Hillside Inn] there on that site. The Gross family had it.

T. Haas: Yeah. Well, he said that his father and mother used to own it or run the two, so it might have been before—

P. Boeddinghaus: Beautiful. It was a beautiful building.

T. Haas: Yeah. And he was telling me that's how it got the name Inn Place.

P. Boeddinghaus: Well the tape is coming to an end, Ted. And we could just go on and on. We'll have to do this again and get more of your stories of Metuchen because I love listening to it and you're so informative. And I think it's great that you remember all these addresses and names. And thank you very much.

T. Haas: The one thing, okay.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, say it again. We have time.

T. Haas: The only one that would be different, remember anything happening, was at 319 Middlesex [Avenue], which was known as the White Sisters of Africa [convent] and all that property where Stirling Court is, used to be there. And they used to have the Corpus Christi Feast there and it used to be very crowded with the feast and procession there. And that was when they had a guild and an awful lot of people from Jersey City and Newark used to come out to support them. And I remember Sister Edith there one time, we went to visit there as kids and she had us all put our hands in a bucket and it was the Sahara sand. So she said, "Now you've touched the Sahara sand." [laughs] But they used to have a lot of African artifacts and a lot of movies they used to show us a lot down in St. Francis [Cathedral] of Africa and all of the mission. Because they had film there of Muslim women without the veil on and the Muslims were trying, always want to give them a lot of money for it, but they would never sell it because they said if they ever took it back, people would be killed because they showed their face. But I remember that being there and have to go up there, and we used to pitch in as Boy Scouts and help them shovel snow. Yeah, up there at 319 Middlesex. [loud background talking] Before that they used to be at 6 Plainfield Avenue where [Harry] Wilbert's was.

P. Boeddinghaus: Yes, did he have the coal company?

T. Haas: Yeah, Wilbert [Metuchen Coal Company] and that was on the corner Christol [Street] and Main Street and Clive [Street].

P. Boeddinghaus: I was trying to think of that name. That was Wilbert?

T. Haas: Wilbert's Coal Company. Yeah, over the years, and that was there. But the White Sisters [of Africa] lived there and then they moved up to 319 Middlesex and that used to be the Smith's estate. And Dick Smith [Richard G. Smith] used to work with me in the letter carrier; that was his grandfather's place. And then they moved up—there was a Smith's, who I think was the same ones, they moved on the corner of Carlton [Road] and Woodbridge [Avenue]. There used to be a big house with a big brick wall around it [formerly located at 299 Woodbridge Avenue]. They moved from there when they sold to the nuns. They built that and brought it up there over the years. And what he was noted for, from what I understand, he owned an awful lot of real estate in New York City, Mr. Smith did. And I remember John McCarrahan [phonetic], one of the letter carriers, told me he had a building in New York that you couldn't get in. You had to go in one building and go up and go through it because they didn't have no entrance to it. Yeah, he was noted for it, yeah.

P. Boeddinghaus: Oh, interesting. That's tricky. Well, we've done fine, Ted. And I really appreciate this so much. You have been wonderful. We'll have to get together again and go over some other neighborhoods.

T. Haas: Yeah, we can over neighborhoods, different neighborhoods.

P. Boeddinghaus: You have such great stories about Metuchen, living here, working here. That's wonderful. I thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]