Betty Richards: The recording is the property of the Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated. And it cannot be reproduced without the written consent of the Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated. June 6, 1978. Betty Richards visiting with Judge Robert A. Welsh, retired, of 56 Center Street, Dennis Port, Massachusetts. What is your full name?

Robert Welsh: My full name is Robert A. Welsh, W-E-L-S-H.

BR: What was the date of your birth?

RW: March 7, 1903.

BR: Where were you born?

RW: I was born in Everett, Massachusetts. My father happened to be attending law school at the time. Following his course up there in law, he returned to Provincetown. So I only lived in Everett about three months, but actually I was not born in Provincetown.

BR: Your father was born where?

RW: In Provincetown.

BR: Can you tell me about your father in Provincetown?

RW: Yes. My father was a baby in his family, the youngest of seven or eight children. I only know this, of course, from what he related to me. He was a very poor boy. He came from a poor family. He was a very – had a brilliant mind. None of his brothers and sisters finished high school. Not that they couldn't compete, but they were so poor, they all went to work. He was very advanced in school and finished high school at fifteen years of age, graduated. Then did little work around Provincetown.

BR: What kind of work did he do?

RW: Laborious work, driving horses, teams of jiggers we called them in those days, [inaudible] fish. Of course, I don't remember that, but I only know this from what he told me. He worked for ten or twelve years. Horses and teams. He had a little ice business. Sold the ice to the fishermen to keep the fish fresh. Worked day and night and so forth.

BR: Did he have his own ice pond?

RW: Well, he did. He bought a little pond, I guess, when he got a little money. In those days, things were cheap. [inaudible] Shank Painter pond today, the Shank Painter section of Provincetown. Shank Painter Road. That was the nickname of the village he lived in. It’s on the west end of Provincetown.

BR: They called it Shank?

RW: Shank, S-H-A-N-K P-A-I-N-T-E-R. Shank Painter Road is the road that now connects Route 6 with Provincetown, the western section of the town. That's about it.

BR: Your father later became a judge?

RW: Yes. Well, that was quite a jump of course.

BR: Can you tell me about –?

RW: Well, before that, of course – after working ten or ten years, three children, Walter Welsh, my brother, my sister Beatrice Welsh, and I was the baby of the family, so-called, Robert A. Welsh. I was born while he was in law school. That's how I happened to be born in Everett.

BR: Well, tell me how did he decide to –

RW: Well, he accumulated a little money after working twelve, fourteen years with my mother's assistance, I assume. She was a very frugal woman.

BR: He was married when he just went across –?

RW: Yes. Yes. He moved up there. My brother, my sister, not me. They carried me up – I guess she did. In 1903, in March, he was in school there, and I was born there. He finished in May. We all returned to Provincetown.

BR: Can you tell me what he did when he came back to Provincetown?

RW: Well, he went and did the same thing because he passed the bar exam. In fact, he didn't finish law school. He couldn't afford it. He went two years to Boston University Law School. He went to the dean, [who] said he couldn't come back. Dean Albers, A-L-B-E-R-S, who was the dean then. Said to him, to my father, "Walter, you're one of the best students up here. You could go in there, I think you could pass the exam. Well, you haven't got your degree, you'd have to go get several more subjects." My father said, "I'll take a whack at it," so to speak. He went in and passed the bar exam and then returned with his degree. Became a lawyer. Returned to Provincetown, but no law business. But he lived because he had his horses and teams and drove his horses and teams for some years before he got in the law business, two or three years.

BR: Do you remember any stories he might have told you about his law practice?

RW: Yes. He said his first case – he went a couple of years, he didn't get any business. There was another lawyer in the town and the judge in those days, he was a fellow named Hopkins, whose background was a little different. [inaudible] went way back to the Pilgrims, so to speak. The Hopkins is a family, which [inaudible] some of the members of the Pilgrim group who landed there. Raymond A. Hopkins his name was, a very nice man, I remember. He practiced law, like the state's Superior Court. Naturally, the teamster lawyer didn't get much

business. If he did, it was a poorer client. So he kept the business until he became a judge and practiced law beside it.

BR: Can you tell me about your boyhood in Provincetown?

RW: My boyhood, I was an ordinary boy. I played around the fish piers, the wharves, went swimming, and played ball in the [inaudible] of the town. I liked to play ball. I was a fairly good ball player. Rather coordinated. Loved baseball. I thought I'd be a big-league ball player as any kid would think. I played on the high school team, and so forth. Went to college, tried to make the team, couldn't make it. I went to Holy Cross College and they had the best ball teams in the country in those days. Of course, I then settled down, studied a little bit.

BR: What do you remember about Provincetown? The town itself.

RW: As a young boy?

BR: Yes.

RW: As a very young boy, I remember the artists painting in the streets. Didn't mean much to me. I wasn't interested too much.

BR: Now, what year would this be?

RW: Oh, I'd say about 1912. They were very active. They had a lot of – as I got older, I began to meet some of the students, some of the lady students, some of the girl students. Got more interested in them because I loved to dance. They'd have these dances; these students would go there. I met girls who were artists and enjoyed it very much.

BR: When did the art colony begin in Provincetown?

RW: Well, I wouldn't know when it began. I remember as a young boy, there were many artists there when I was there – and writers. I was about ten, eleven years old.

BR: Can you remember any art schools there?

RW: Yes. Famous art school in Provincetown was Charles W. Hawthorne, who I knew and his boy. He had this one child, Joe Hawthorne, I believe was the musical supervisor of the Duluth, Minnesota orchestra. That's something like the Boston Symphony, I guess you'd call it. He does that type of work today. I knew the Hawthornes very well.

BR: Where was this? The art school?

RW: He was the greatest, the best teacher and one of the greatest artists in the country, in my opinion, Charles W. Hawthorne.

BR: He was well known all over the world.

RW: I wouldn’t say all over the world then, but it's like many of those things, he's known better now that he's dead. Why? I don't know. His pictures were – matter of fact, when I really became a lawyer, I settled Charles W. Hawthorne’s estate because I knew his wife. He was the first big estate I had, so to speak.

BR: What year was that?

RW: Oh, I would say I graduated from law school 1928. I'd been a lawyer three or four – I would say ’32 or ’33. I'm guessing. I don't know. I was a young lawyer. Maybe later. It could have been 1940.

BR: What kind of art did he teach?

RW: Hawthorne?

BR: Yes.

RW: Well, I guess we'd call him a realist. I don't understand too much about art. He painted things as he saw them, as they looked to you and to me. A realist, I think they called him. He is the greatest, in my opinion, realist artist that I know of. I don’t know much about art.

BR: Where was he from originally?

RW: I’ve forgotten where he came from. I believe Pennsylvania, but I don't know.

BR: Can you tell me –?

RW: Of course, he was there only summers.

BR: Where did he go in the wintertime?

RW: Well, I don't know, New York or Pennsylvania probably. I don’t know.

BR: The school was not open in the wintertime?

RW: No. The art school? No.

BR: So where would these students go in the wintertime?

RW: Well, these students, I assume, many of them would go to Paris, places like that. They had scholarships or could afford it.

BR: Do you remember any of his students?

RW: They had a lot of art schools around New York and in different places.

BR: Do you remember any students that became famous?

RW: Hawthorne's? Yes. Henry Hensche, H-E-N-S-C-H-E, I believe. He's still living. Henry Hensche I knew very well, a few years older than me. I would say Hensche's probably seventy-eight, nine years old. He had a school himself after he left Hawthorne. I don't believe he teaches now. But he's had a school up until four or five years ago. Henry Hensche and his wife are still living there.

BR: Was she a student?

RW: She was, I believe, also at Hawthorne, and he married her. Yeah.

BR: Any other people that might have become famous? Any other students that became famous?

RW: Well, I remember Henry Hensche of Hawthorne's. There was another one – I'm not too much up on this art business, but right offhand, he's the one I remember the best. Well, I can't right offhand. Probably after you leave, I'll think of it. Go ahead, Mrs. Richards.

BR: How about some of the writers?

RW: Writers?

BR: That were in Provincetown?

RW: Well, of course in my day, when I was a young, a very young boy, Eugene O'Neill – no one ever heard of him then – was around Provincetown, writing and trying to put on plays. He put on plays. In fact, wrote his first play in Provincetown.

BR: What was his first play?

RW: *[Bound] East of Cardiff.* I don't know. Something like that. He put it on a little wharf in Provincetown.

BR: Do you remember the wharf where the theater was?

RW: Well, there were two wharves. The original wharf, I remember, was called the Sixes and Sevens. They had little plays there, and that went down in a storm. Then they had another place that they – at the west end of the town, I believe, right on the water. I think he put some of his plays on there. Still put some of them on even now in the present Provincetown Playhouse. In fact, only recently they ran this playhouse at Provincetown, and the only plays they did put on were the plays of Eugene O'Neill for the whole summer.

BR: Why did they call it the Sixes and Sevens?

RW: I don't know. But I remember as a boy, and then it became a nightclub and it was a hangout, so to speak. You'd get a cheap beer, things like that. At my age, I wasn't able to drink beer in those days. They'd gather there – a little club amongst themselves. So the ordinary person, as you know, including myself, isn't interested in ten or fifteen kids, so-called young kids, studying art. Unless they're artistically inclined, they wouldn't be interested. Socially, I would say they were a group, kept by themselves. Until later on, I became older, [and] I met some of the art students, especially those of the opposite sex. I would dance with the young kids.

BR: What age were you then when you met them?

RW: Oh, I'd say high school, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen.

BR: That would be in the – nineteen, eighteen?

RW: Yes. Dances. In those days they had public dances at the old town hall. They had an Art Association dance once a year, it was the big event of the town socially, and you'd go in costume.

BR: Was the entire town invited?

RW: Yes. Anyone – public – could buy the ticket. But most of the younger people would know the younger students, my age, the boys, the girls, and so forth. You'd know them and you had dances before they ever came, naturally, but that was the big event of the town.

BR: What kind of music did they have?

RW: Ordinary music. I don't know what you called it in those days. I don't know. Jazz, I guess. I don't know.

BR: Did they have a band?

RW: Yeah, a band. Well, for the Provincetown, they'd hire a special band from Boston or someplace. They had local bands, but for the Provincetown Art Association, there was generally an outside band.

BR: What kind of dances did you do?

RW: Waltzes, foxtrots. Mostly waltzes myself. That was in those days because as you get older – the foxtrot, I guess was the thing in those days when I was in school and college.

BR: Do you remember Mr. Harry Kemp?

RW: Oh, met him. Knew him very well. Was present with him on many [occasions]. In fact, my first client.

BR: Was he?

RW: Yes, I think he was my first client. Harry Kemp. Well, he wasn't my first one, but he was a client of mine. I would say I'd been a lawyer then ten, twelve – forty years, thirty-eight years old.

BR: And what was he known as?

RW: He was a poet. Heavy drinker. Was a fighter, actual prize fighter. Oh, yeah. He fought, sparring partner for someone who you wouldn't know, Lew Tendler from Philadelphia, [who] became middleweight champion. He was a sparring partner. Harry, when he was sober, was a very kind person. Kept in good physical shape, exercised and so forth. Lived in the dunes. Heavy drinker.

BR: He was known as the poet of the dunes?

RW: What's that?

BR: He was known as the poet of the dunes?

RW: Yes. Of course, [inaudible] lived in the dunes also, and he was a close friend of Eugene O'Neill.

[Recording paused.]

BR: How did Eugene O'Neill come to Provincetown?

RW: Well, I wouldn't know how he came there, but I know some of his background. Dr. Daniel H. Hebert, who had been a medical doctor, my doctor in Provincetown for years – in fact, he was fifty-six years a doctor before he passed away. He practiced the whole time. He was a very poor young boy himself, and he didn't have too many patients when he first came. He'd have all the artists. First of all, they didn't have any money, most of them. He'd wait on them and give them and extend credit. He got very familiar with the artists. As a result of that, he became very familiar with Eugene O'Neill and Harry Kemp and others. And he was their doctor, I would say, the doctor for the artists, so to speak. The other doctors were too conservative in the sense they had business and they didn't want to bother. These people didn't have any money to pay them anyway. That's putting it bluntly, but I think that's the story as far as that is concerned. But speaking of Dr. Hebert, what you first asked me, Hebert was the Boston University Medical School in Boston, and Eugene O'Neill's at Harvard. They roomed together, a place in the Back Bay somewhere near the medical school. They became very friendly and did room together.

BR: That was before they ever came to Provincetown?

RW: Well, I know this – I happen to know this, I was a very close friend and attorney and lawyer for years for Dr. Hebert. Hebert used to take pictures for pay because he was smart.

BR: He used to –?

RW: He would take pictures as they painted, these artists. Come up [inaudible] then they'd go up to [inaudible], come on, pick out a picture. He knew how to pick them out. I guess he did all right in the end.

BR: Was that the general trend in those days?

RW: No, it was for Dr. Hebert, but no, the other doctors were real conservatives. It was two dollars or three dollars a visit. They don't [inaudible] three dollars.

BR: Well, did you ever collect the fish or something for your fee or pushing potatoes?

RW: No, not me. Well, I would get money for the fee. I had to get these fishermen and their fees. I was very liberal with my fees, easy on my fees. Out of appreciation, these people brought fish to my house and my father's house. So in my wife's situation, for instance, when we first married, I hadn't been practicing long – she was a schoolteacher from Boston – Belmont, Mass, and she came to the door one day. I was in my office up in the town hall in Provincetown. She says, "A man came down, he didn't talk very good English," and said his name was – I forget what his name was now, but whatever it was, I recognized the nick[name]. They all have nicknames, those Portuguese fishermen, most of them. [inaudible] I guess that's what his name is. She said, "He left it here, and I didn't know what to do with this live lobster." They bring them live, of course. He was so kind and in broken English, he says, "Mrs. Welsh, I show you how to fix them." This man who's now deceased, I remember very well, came in, and he got out a big pot, they call them – broken English.

BR: Big pot?

RW: My wife was at Danforth when she met me, a Downeast Maine Yankee, and she had never run into these types of people, and she thought she understood him. So she got him a big pot, a can, and put it on the stove and put in the water. She boiled him twenty minutes. "He'll be nice for you and the judge." And she did. I came home. She didn't then dare take it out. I took it out. That's a small matter, but she was all excited about it. The man was so nice to her. Yeah. Anything else you have –? [Recording paused.] I say typical Portuguese people. I say typical, it could be also true of other Latin so-called, like Italian or Spanish, get it? They're all very affable people. I enjoy Italians, for instance, their philosophy of life and everything. But the Portuguese people are more, I would say, backward in the sense they don't have the initiative or the dare of the Italian people. In fact, Portuguese people today, of course, are leaders in the world, discoverers, and all of them were great navigators. So were the Italian after all, but the Portuguese are – of course, [inaudible] Portuguese were the best because my mother was born [inaudible] my grandfather was a cook, Portuguese, on a vessel out of Provincetown for years. I can just remember my grandfather. Very affable people. Nice people.

BR: So you were playmates with the Portuguese?

RW: Oh, sure. Well, when I went to – I was brought up in Provincetown. I'd say it's about sixty percent Portuguese, forty percent Yankee, so-called. If you call them [inaudible] really not Yankees. They're people from Nova Scotia, Scotch. I call a Yankee [inaudible], so the people came from England – people that settled here. Nova Scotians didn't settle here. Put it that way – or the Scotch. Of course, I just say that. Then as time marched on, as [inaudible] right up to date, Portuguese descent of people in Provincetown would be about eighty percent and twenty percent etcetera, whatever they may be. Third generation now, and fourth generation Portuguese here.

BR: You mentioned that Provincetown was one of the biggest towns on the Cape –

RW: It was the biggest town.

BR: – at the turn of the 19th century, 20th century.

RW: The population in the old days was six thousand people. But Dennis, see where we are now, in Dennis Port, I'd say Dennis had about eight hundred people. In other words, Barnstable was not the biggest town in the Cape, or Falmouth. In those days – oh, yeah.

BR: What [are] your earliest memories of Provincetown?

RW: Earliest memories, the dedication of Monument. Now I can't remember much. I was probably seven or eight years old, I'm guessing. Definite.

BR: What do you remember about that?

RW: Well, I remember President Taft came there because my father was on the commission, or what he called the committee in those days. It was about 1912?

BR: Yes.

RW: Well, I was in high school or grammar school, so called. My father was all dressed up and going with all the kids in the town. Everybody got dressed up for it. We tried to get near the town pier.

BR: What do you mean "dressed up?"

RW: Well, dressed up as children, put on your Sunday suit, whatever you call it. You only wore that on Sunday. Kids in Provincetown all wore little cutoff pants, not bathing suits.

BR: Short pants.

RW: When you couldn't wear them anymore they'd cut them off, and that was your bathing suit. Yeah.

BR: So what else do you remember about the dedication?

RW: Well, the President was going down and the fact that he was the President of the United States. It didn't mean too much to me in those days, but what impressed me was I never saw so many people in Provincetown. On the pier, kids – they had difficulty getting on the pier. I went with my gang or my kids my age, and we got to the head of the wharf and so forth. Of course, the older people just push you aside. They wanted to get down there.

BR: How did the President come into Provincetown?

RW: He came in off a battleship as I remember, what they call a little launch. They have a float because Provincetown was a naval center in those days anyway, a lot of battleships. He came right up this, like a stairway, a gangplank up on to the pier. The pier was a wooden pier, but a very big pier. Strong pier. Had a railroad track right down to the end in those days, right to the fish plants. The end of the wharf. Called it Railroad Wharf for that matter. Not town pier – Railroad Wharf. New Haven Railroad owned the pier.

BR: Did a lot of people come in on the train that day?

RW: Yes. The train goes back right down to the wharf, like an excursion train. The depot was up the center part of the town, quarter of a mile away. That particular day was, I remember I never seen a train. I seen freight cars on the wharf, but this was a –

BR: Passenger?

RW: – long passenger train, which ran like an excursion from Boston, for instance. It came down with twelve, fourteen cars, took the whole – the pier was twelve hundred feet long. It still is. The new pier.

BR: Were the trains decorated specially?

RW: Yes, all flags and bunting. These excursions came from Boston. They knew the town, of course. The boat [inaudible] special landing. And he came up in this – I remember he was a big fat man; that's all I could say. Kids are – “Gee, what a fat man.”

BR: How was the President dressed?

RW: Someone would look at you, older people who want to give you a [inaudible] side of the face. So I didn’t go any further. All these kids went back, we went swimming the rest of the day. I suppose they went up to – we didn't go up. We weren’t interested in going to [inaudible], wanted to go swimming.

BR: Did you see the President?

RW: Yes.

BR: How was he dressed?

RW: Well, as I recall, he had a plug hat on, and a very fat man, of course. A stout man. A [inaudible] man and people around him.

BR: What was the parade like?

RW: Well, bands and an ordinary parade. For Provincetown, it was a big thing, of course.

BR: Were there any banquets that day?

RW: Well, see, I assume so, but at my age I was put into bed, I suppose. I don't know. My mother was tired and – no, it wouldn't affect me. I wouldn't be interested.

BR: Can you tell me when the Navy came to Provincetown?

RW: Well, it was always in my day – I don't know when they started. Summers they'd come. In fact, the Atlantic Fleet would be around for five, six weeks.

BR: How many ships were there?

RW: Four or five battleships, cruisers, destroyers. The North Atlantic Fleet, they called it. They'd be there almost all summer. Very lively town. As a kid, as a young boy, I worked in the hot dog stand. I was about sixteen Yeah, sixteen. And this hot dog stand, which is still there, is up the head of the wharf. Of course, great business from people anywhere in the summer, but the Navy, the sailors, great for hot dogs. After all, cheap food, five cents in those days for a hot dog. I got pretty good at it. I did that two or three summers. The sailors would have leave, shore at night, fights, drinking. They had their own patrol, work with two or three policemen in Provincetown. That's why I liked the job. I guess a lot of excitement with this job. You see everything in front of the counter. Yeah.

BR: Was your father a judge at this time?

RW: Oh, no. My father was a lawyer and ran this ice business also. I knew him being a lawyer and running the ice business, I used to go up to the barn. They had horses. Sundays, he'd give me the horse to go riding because they're kind of hard to ride – great, big work horses. Your legs would stretch – the big fat heavy horses. But they wouldn't run away, just chug, chug. Kids used to have a lot of fun. No, no, he was just a – my father didn't become a judge until 19 – governor – David I. Walsh was Governor. 1914, I would say. I was born in 1903; I was eleven, twelve years old. I remember it because of my mother, all the excitement. He made a living being a lawyer and a teamster or an iceman, but finally, he fellows work for him. But finally he became a judge. I understand that story because it's political. They say it isn't today, but don't let them kid you. Because I guess I can speak with experience on that, having three generations of judges in the family. I say political – not as much today as it was then.

BR: But some.

RW: Yeah. Oh yeah. So he became a judge, and that was a big excitement. I remember this well because my mother was naturally very happy. Because we were Catholics, and I remember as a little boy I didn't like to go to church in that sense, you know how kids are. We all had to go to church because she says your father's just – Governor Walter's just appointed your father; we're going to go into church to thank God for being so kind to him. And when you're ten, twelve years old, you kind of – I went. In that sense, I could see my mother's point. I'd be the same way today.

BR: Now he was appointed judge of what district?

RW: He was a Democrat. Second District Court of Boston, which includes nine, seven or eight towns. Goes from Bass River here right to Provincetown.

BR: Now, who was the judge before your father?

RW: Raymond A. Hopkins, the man I mentioned before, who did all the –

[End of Track One.]

BR: Do you remember World War I?

RW: Yes, I was in high school. I remember it very well. I must have been fourteen, fifteen years old, and remember the day the armistice was signed. I remember that so well, that's the best thing I remember about the war. We all got out of school early, and we went down to – I think it was – the Universal Church or Methodist – one of them. All the church bells were ringing. I went down with the kids. We'd all get tired pulling the rope. Folks would be in there, in the church, ringing the bell.

BR: What was Provincetown like during World War I?

RW: Well, it was an exciting town.

BR: Were there a lot of ships?

RW: Yes, sure. Submarines, especially.

BR: Do you remember any of them?

RW: She was a little submarine base there. Still is, not now, but up to a certain time.

BR: And what was that base like?

RW: Well, submarines made in Groton, Connecticut, came in there. I think it was Groton, Connecticut. They would try all these submarines out after they'd make them, had a run off Provincetown on the back of Long Point, about three miles where they'd drop down and run under water. And test them before they turned them over to the government, like you would any

big boat. The *Wasp*, for instance, [inaudible] I remember was [inaudible] up then. The trial runs on Cape Cod Bay off Provincetown, no wonder they picked Provincetown, it's very safe there. All sand, no rock. If you went down, hit bottom, it might do a little damage, but you wouldn't want to go off of Maine Coast, I should say. I wouldn't want to. Yes?

BR: So that was during World War I?

RW: That was a big thing in the towns in summers. Summer people in the Navy too. But [during] the war, we rang the bell. Everybody was so happy. [inaudible]. That's all I remember about the kids. There were young fellows going off to enlist in the Boston Navy. But most of the Provincetown boys, who then were eighteen to twenty-five enlisted in the Navy, they sent a boat to Provincetown and went down to the pier. A lot of them went down with their parents and said goodbye, and they went on a boat right to Boston, they had so many there [inaudible] isolated. For instance, there were a hundred and fifty people who went into the Army, whatever it might be, a hundred and twenty five would be Navy fellows. Well, if you got that many enlistees, go down there, enlist them, and take them on a boat, take them [inaudible] these places where they set them out across.

BR: Then what year was this?

RW: World War I? World War I was over in '18, wasn't it, I think? '17, I'd say. 1917, yeah. I got out of high school '21. Yeah.

BR: So what kind of a boat did they take from Provincetown to Boston?

RW: The Navy fellows?

BR: To go to enlist.

RW: I guess they were already enlisted as far as I know. I don't know. They just took civilian clothes [inaudible] they had been enlisted. They had men come down there, I assume, but they had a hundred and twenty-five – why send a train down there and boats around anyway. [inaudible] a lot of people were sad. I was a kid though. I wasn't sad. I was excited.

BR: Did they have blackouts during World War I?

RW: Sure. Oh, World War I? It was World War II, I believe. I don't know. No, I don't think so. No, I would say no. I know because, see, there wasn't too much flying those days. They just began to fly, wouldn't they? Well, they'd fly; Navy and Army had planes, but I don't think so. I don't remember. I remember blackouts, but I thought it was World War II.

BR: Yeah, I know we did have them.

RW: If they had them, I didn't remember. World War I. So as we were discussing, my father became a judge in 1914. Of course, I was very proud. I found out afterwards – I was sad in a sense – it was difficult growing up with your father being a judge.

BR: Why was it difficult?

RW: Well, difficult – everybody, I think were – they were watching you, thinking if you – as a young boy, I was stealing apples too with other kids, jumping through people's yards. [inaudible] I was hindered a little bit. I was [inaudible]. I didn't do things that I did before that. I knew that my father was a judge. They'd call you names, sissy and everything.

BR: And how long was your father a judge?

RW: A long while. Not long while. I guess I beat that record. My father was a judge in 1914 [to] 1933. He died in '64. He wasn't a judge too long.

BR: Then it was nineteen years. And who replaced your father?

RW: Me, that's where the length of time – see, I was a young kid. I was twenty-nine years old. I practiced law with my father in Hyannis, Welsh and Welsh. Never forget growing up there as a young boy, young lawyer; my father got this office over the old [inaudible] drugstore out of Hyannis, and big glass windows – three units. This man owned the building. He knew the man, and he had a [inaudible] gold leaf, put big letters Robert A. Welsh, lawyer. It must have been about six inches, went down the [inaudible] about two inches with Walter Welsh Associates. I was embarrassed. What are you doing that for, Pa? I always called my father Pa – Ma and Pa. My father [said], "Hell, everybody knows who I am. They don't know who you are." So we practiced law four years, and I became – naturally, I was very close to my father because we were both lawyers.

BR: Did your father and you both live in Provincetown at that time?

RW: Yes, but I'd come up – he'd go back – I'd stay two nights in Hyannis. I brought my own car. I was there in the office. I mean, the office when the [inaudible] passed away.

BR: And how long did you serve as the judge?

RW: Well, I served a long while, forty-one years. I got out – I'd have to think. I'm seventy-five now. They passed the law that all judges must retire at seventy. So it was '68, '69 when I became seventy, which is five years ago. I had to retire. So I went in 1933, March of '33. Just over forty years, or forty-one years.

BR: And who replaced you?

RW: I was a presiding judge. I was never a special justice. Generally, you're a special justice first, and then presiding judge. I became presiding judge of the court – succeeded him.

BR: Was your father a presiding judge?

RW: Yes, he was. We had, too, what they called special justices, too, in those days. They do now have specialists, but they're gradually doing away with them. But that situation came very unexpected to me. That was a very unusual situation how I got that job. If you're interested, I'll just –

BR: Yes, I would like to know.

RW: I'd say political in this sense, I was twenty-nine years old, and my father was [inaudible] funeral in Provincetown at our home. In those days, as I recall, they didn't have funeral homes [inaudible] from the house. My dad used to say to me, "Those who are buried in funeral homes are the ones the wife didn't want in the husband in the house anyway." I'm telling you what he told me. In other words, it was a disgrace to send your husband or wife to be buried at the funeral home. You opened up the parlor, which is only opened up on Christmas, as I recall, in my house. No one was allowed in the parlor, we kids. But my father was laid out there because – since I was very sad, I lost my partner who gave me a lot of advice. How was I going to be a lawyer or do things without asking him? We were partners. Naturally, great disappointment as a person [inaudible] and my mother, of course. Sad situation. My mother came in. She says, "Bob, someone called you on the telephone." It was upstairs [inaudible] a friend, [inaudible]. "Bob, this is Judge (Abner Braley?), Edgartown." [inaudible] He said, "I'm sorry I'm not able to get to your father's funeral." He said, [inaudible]. "There's something I want to ask you." I said, "What's that, Judge (Braley?)?" He said, "You interested in succeeding your father?" I said, "Gee. I'm too young. I had never even thought of a thing like that." I don't know the government or the – Joseph B. Ely, E-L-Y was governor. He says, "Well, I'm a good Yankee Democrat." He was an old Yankee Democrat. "And you've been active politically for years." "Yes." And he said, "If you're interested, I think you can get the job." I said, "Oh no, I couldn't get the job." He said, "You don't know the governor, that's true, but you know the man who got the governor elected. He's a good friend of yours." I'm so upset. "Who are you referring to?" He said, "Senator David I. Walsh who appointed your father a judge. You've been his confidant as a young boy since your father became a judge." Which I began to come to now. My father had become a judge when I was a kid. I was so happy that he was appointed by a man named David I. Walsh who was a Democrat. I used to send him letters in political campaigns when he was running for the Senate, "Anything I can do for you. Send me your literature; I will distribute it." Nineteen years old. He'd corresponded with me over the years [and] stayed in the Senate a long while. So I happen to go to Holy Cross College for Senator David I. Walsh. He used to come to Provincetown summers, and I'd take him around the town. He'd come with his friends, visit, boat [inaudible]. Always called me by my first name, Robert. The only one ever called me Robert was Senator Walsh and my mother because I didn't care to be called Robert. He says, "You're very close to him. Everybody knows that." I said, "I'm so upset; I don't even know." "You're upset," he said, "but there's four or five people interested in the job. Will you authorize me to send a telegram to David I. Walsh that you're interested?" I said, "Sure." I came down, told my mom. She discouraged me. [inaudible] because I was so young, I wouldn't get the job anyway. I'd just lost my father and started having a nervous breakdown. Not get the job would be the second disappointment on top of it. I was a lawyer anyway, and you could make a living, and single, automobile, lived home with my mother, no expenses. I said, "I'll talk about it later." My father was buried. I said, "I'm my own boss [inaudible] get the job." I went to Boston [inaudible] room in the Parker house because I'd been in politics as a kid. All by myself, I sat

down, wrote out how to work this thing out. I called Senator Walsh's office from the Parker house. [inaudible] was a congressman; he used to be up in Fitchburg. He was a secretary. He just died [inaudible] Father [inaudible], Jesuit priest beat him out for Congress two or three years ago, if you know politics. "Hey Phil, how are you?" "Doing well. Are you still in Provincetown?" I said, "Anyone get in touch with [inaudible]?" "Yeah, some old duffer up there named (Braley?) got a telegram in here, but the son's on vacation. He isn't coming in until tomorrow. So I didn't bother to call." "So what do you think?" "Hell, you want the job? Sure, you'll [inaudible] as far as he's concerned. You know the governor?" "No, no." He said, "I'll call you back. He's coming in tomorrow." Called me back the next day. "Hello?" He said, "The Senator's on the phone and wants to talk to you." I'm in a hotel all alone. [inaudible] "Hello, Senator." "Hi Robert, how are you? Sorry to hear about …Yeah, I understand you're interested. As far as I'm concerned, you got the job." "What shall I do?" He said, "Do nothing." He said, "Paul Dever went to school with me, and he's the attorney general, my pal." "I don't care who's the attorney general. The man [inaudible] Joe Ely, Governor Ely." "You don't know him?" "No." "Don't do anything." I came home. Finally, picked up the paper one day, and the Bedford paper says (Francis Carrera?) of New Bedford, a Portuguese extraction, a good fellow and a good lawyer, Democrat. His picture's in the paper; he's going to be appointed judge to succeed my father. I said, "Gee, that's funny. The senator practically told me not to do anything. He'd get the job for me. The Senator wouldn't lie." So I went to Boston, saw a newspaper fellow I knew at the *Boston Post* in those days, a democratic newspaper. He was a political writer, and I told him the story. He knew me very well – Mr. Brady, Bob Brady. He says, "Gee, that's funny. Well, not the newspaper business. The *Bedford Evening Standard* is a good Republican paper over there in New Bedford." The *Post* is a Democrat paper. "Eighty percent of the people in Bedford are Portuguese extraction. (Carrera's?) Portuguese; he's the leader over there. He's after the job. They don't care about you. They know it'll be good news there." He goes to the editor. He said, "We'll put your picture in the paper. You're going to be named next week, and you get a lot of advertisement and might get the job." [inaudible] and what about [inaudible]? "You come with me to get to the State House." Banks were all closed. This is March of '33. Roosevelt had just got in office – bank holiday. Get to the State House and [inaudible] put me in the backroom there because I had seen the place. I'd been to the governor's office. [inaudible] door. Opens the door, and I can see there's Governor Ely in there talking to three men, bankers, I guess they were. Bob Brady said to me, he said – this is Bob Brady – "Obviously those damn bankers [inaudible] bank's closed [inaudible]. He turned around, looked over to me, he said to Bob Brady, "Hi, Bob. I was so excited." I thought he [inaudible] how he knew me? I didn't know the man. He said, "Hi, Bob?" He meant Bob Brady. [inaudible] the appointment. He said, "Hi, Bob." And I went, "Hi." Never forget it. Finally, those fellows get out of the office. He says, "Come on in." This fellow takes me right in there. I'll never forget Governor Ely (said?), "Those G-D bankers bother me. What the hell can I do about it?" Great guy. [inaudible]. He says to Bob, "Bob, what's on your mind?" "I want you to meet this fellow here. This is Bob Welsh, Jr." "Oh yeah, how are you? How are you?" [inaudible] He said, "There was a vacancy down here." "Yeah, I knew his father." "He's interested." "Yeah," he said, "the Senator got in touch with you. Wanted you to give him the job. What do you think, Bob?" "Shoot, I think the senator's right." Good democrat and all this stuff. He finally looked at me; he said, "You got the job. Go home [inaudible]." And I got the job. I tell that story because I was a political appointment. Now, my difficulty came – was in the council. I had to be confirmed with the council. See, I was twenty-nine years old, and the

council were all Republicans except one man in those days. Now, I got to get by this council. The people that wanted the job, like the special justice – no question, they were older and more mature and brighter probably than I was. More experienced. Let's put it that way. So I went to my law school dean, a fellow named Simpson, who was an old Yankee professor, my favorite professor. [I was] one of his favorite pupils. I was a good student, a Law Review boy, and the grand master of the Masons. I was active in the Knights of Columbus. Great friends. [inaudible] a good Yankee Democrat. I said, "What do you think, Professor?" "You're my boy. You can get the job." "What do you mean?" He wrote a letter – one of the greatest student he ever had, which wasn't so. I was confirmed. It's a long story.

BR: It wasn't that difficult then?

RW: No. So that's it.

BR: Do you have any stories you can tell me about your early days as a judge?

RW: The courts. Oh yes, I'd be here all day. First of all, I didn't take the job too seriously. In this sense, I was nervous – the responsibility. But having been clerk court for seven summers when I was in college, a courtroom was no strange place to me. I sat in front of the judge summers; it happened to be my father. I'd go home and talk about things. Instead of going to that desk, I went to the other desk. So I was – like everything – responsibility, tied me down a little bit, but I was still single. I didn't marry until three years later. It was a little difficult. Did things I shouldn't have, probably.

BR: How different were the courts back in –?

RW: Very informal, and [inaudible] informal nature anyway. Fair to everybody. You have to have a sort of sense to it. It didn't bother me much. You just grew into it. I had grown into it anyway.

BR: Is there any case –?

RW: Well, we'd have unusual cases or funny cases, if you'd call them such. Yes.

BR: What would be a funny case if you could remember?

RW: A funny case? Well, if I told you this, you'd laugh. We had a man in Provincetown named (Steels?). He was Portuguese. These names mean nothing, but they come from the old country, and these so-called Yankee or American people they work for, they take their name.

BR: Why was that?

RW: Well, they honored the man so much. Back now before my time even, but my father would tell me these stories. He was Irish, but he knew the Portuguese people – born and brought up with them, married one – my mother. He talked broken English. And he had hens. This dog used to steal all the hens or kill the hens, going under the fence. He put up a fence. He'd go

under the fence on his farm and kill these hens. So he shot the dog and chose the to [inaudible] name. Came down to the court, had him in for shooting a dog. The place was crowded, a small case, but involved those people a lot. The man got the right to shoot the dog. No, no man could shoot a dog unless the dog is bothering him, [inaudible], and all that business. So they put him on the stand. He didn't have a lawyer; he was his own lawyer, and he talked broken English. I said, "Mr. (Steel?), you didn't have to shoot that dog, did you?" "Sure, I had to shoot him." I said, "But the dog wasn't bothering you. You didn't see him kill the hen, but you knew he did. You saw the dead hen." "Yeah, I see dead hen. I go see dead hen there. I know he's my hen, and I know whose dog he is. So I see the dog. He run, so I shot the dog." "Yes, but he wasn't bothering you. You didn't shoot that dog in self-defense." "No, Judge. I no shoot that dog in self-defense. I shoot him in the ass, he go under the fence." The court jumped up, and the people – how are you going to stop them people from laughing? For five minutes, everybody laughed. And I tapped – "Okay, not guilty." That was one of the funniest cases I've ever heard. I've told that at political banquets when I used to speak at banquets in those days. That's the way it happened. I've had a lot of funny cases – and I had only been judge about three or four months.

BR: How about another funny one?

RW: Oh gee. Offhand, let's see, a funny one? That was the funniest one I had. Oh, I'll give you a funny one. Embarrassing. I was embarrassed. So I go up to Harwich. They've got Cape Verdean people in Harwich.

BR: I beg your pardon.

RW: Cape Verdean people known as Portuguese. They're Portuguese in the sense they were under Portuguese rule, but they're not Portuguese. They're half Black and half white, more or less. Because the Cape Verdes; it's Portuguese people. It's Portuguese, and all the [inaudible] Cape Verde. Many of the African people went to Cape Verde. There's a mixture there. You'll find the Cape Verde Islanders [are] good looking people. They're dark, nice features, not real Negro and not real Portuguese; they're a half in that sense, see? In Harwich – I know all about that because that's true. [inaudible] Portuguese people in Bedford; they're not Black. [inaudible] Fall River not Black; they're dark. Same as myself – I've got brown eyes like my mother. My sister has blue eyes, but the point – I'm just giving the background. My grandfather has blue eyes, [inaudible] Azores – cook on a vessel. Anyway, get up there – a man – broken English and so forth. So the [inaudible] said to me, "Wow, there's a lot of Portuguese cases today." "What do you mean Portuguese cases? [inaudible] So get out there, and this girl, big stout woman, was in for – said some man insulted and called her all kinds of names, bad names, and so forth and so forth, Black Portuguese or something. I don't know, whatever he called her. So we get out; the place is packed in Harwich. Probably a hundred and fifty people there. So I got there, and I'm a young fellow. Of course, I want to be dignified. That was my difficulty; I smile too easily. If I want to be a judge to people I've got to be stern as soon as I get there. "Just a minute, no noise in the courtroom here." [inaudible] So this case came up, and she says another man or woman insulted her, called her such and such, no-good-something. Finally, I says, "Well, what'd she call you?" As you get older in this business, a smart judge keeps his mouth shut. But anyway, I'm young. I'd just been a lawyer; you ask a lot of questions. So I says, well – "She called me

Black Portuguese." "She did?" Of course, they're all pretty Black. "But what'd you do?" "I don't do nothing." This is the way she talked. "I didn't do nothing," she says. [inaudible] You tell me just what happened. "Well, he says I'm big, Black Portuguese. When he said that, I turned around, I go like this, Judge. 'Take this in your face, see how you like it.'" I'm looking right at her. Because the courtroom went – I must have blushed. Get it? And couldn't keep order [inaudible]. I said, next case. Turned around, threw her dress right up in my face. [inaudible] stand. "What'd you do?"

BR: So what was the verdict on that one?

RW: Oh, God. I don't know. Not guilty, probably, to make everybody happy. Small [inaudible] things that happen. Of course, as you get older as a judge, you learn this job, but you have to learn to be a judge. You can be a lawyer a thousand years; it doesn't make you a good judge. The main thing is the weakness that human beings talk too much, ask questions. Don't ask too many [questions]. Keep your mouth shut. [inaudible] funny things take place between the lawyers [inaudible]. Gradually, I worked into this. I still appreciate humans. Oh, hundreds of things [inaudible]. I guess I gave you enough of that. What's next? [Recording paused.] You've asked some other things that take place in court, and many embarrassing things take place. [inaudible] First, as a judge in my town, and I suppose any judge of a district court in a town, you know all these people that are involved, people that you've been to school with; they're in for different charges, boys that you've played with, and they haven't been as fortunate or lucky as the judge [inaudible] say, in that sense, and have the opportunities. They're arrested for things, operating under the influence of liquor, or breaking and entering, or being drunk, or whatever it might be. It's very embarrassing. You always do the best you can to give them a break. One of those things. But speaking of embarrassing things, this Fat Francis was a character in the town of Truro. Very stout fellow – they called him Fat Francis. And never took a bath, I guess, dirty-looking. Bright, went to school, went to normal school, became a schoolteacher, and couldn't hold a job, and so forth and so on. He was in court in a civil case before me for not paying this doctor, Daniel H. Hebert, who I previously mentioned, who had a big business. Dr. Hebert was not slow in bringing someone to court to pay the bills. So he brought this Fat Francis in, who was a veteran and all that business – always wore his veteran's cap – for thirty-six dollars in a small claims court. Being a character and known he was coming to court, the court was filled up with people, about seventy-five people, town hall in Provincetown. So the case starts, gets on. Fat Francis takes the stand, who I know well. And he said, "No, I don't owe Dr. Hebert any money. What money I owed him, I paid." "Well, he says, you owe him thirty-six dollars." "Nope. Nope. He's a damn liar." Dr. Hebert is sitting there with his wife. Of course, he's my doctor, this fellow. I said, "Just a minute, Fat." I even called him Fat because I knew him so well. You can't use that language around here." "Well, he's a liar." "Just a minute now." Now I got a problem on my hands. "You tell your story …" So his father had just died six months before that, Fat Francis' father, in Truro. The courtroom was packed. In the back of the courtroom, was his mother, Fat's mother. Fat never married. Of course, that was her son; she loved him. I know she did. He gives his testimony. Dr. Hebert comes to the stand. His wife is sitting there. Gets up and tells how he owes the money, hasn't –

[Recording paused.]

BR: The recording is the property of the Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated, and it cannot be reproduced without the written consent of the Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated. June 6, 1978. Betty Richards visiting with Judge Robert A. Welsh, retired, of 56 Center Street, Dennis Port, Massachusetts. Tape two.

RW: As I was saying, Hebert finished his testimony, goes back to his seat, sits on the end of the aisle next to his wife after testifying that he hadn't paid the bill. Fat Francis said he had; Dr. Hebert said he hadn't. Of course, [inaudible] credibility as a person says who's lying, who isn't? I'm just about to decide the case when in from the back of the room comes forward this woman dressed in black with a black veil over her face I recognize as Fat Francis's mother, or Mrs. Francis, whose husband had died a month or two before. I have to stand up to give you the situation. She comes up all in black. She gets in front of the little bench in Provincetown. The courtroom is crowded. She says, “Mister Judge,” talking broken English, Portuguese descent or whatever she was, she says, “that Dr. Hebert, he's a goddamn liar. My son, Fat, he tell the truth. That's all I got to say.” I wish I could drop through the floor. I wish I was home, but I'm there. You can hear a pin drop. Nobody laughs. What shall I do? Well, ordinarily it's easy. If it's a young person, call the policeman. I hold you in contempt. Lock him up for contempt. The officer’s in the court; he takes the person out, down to the cell downstairs. Here’s this seventy-five-year-old woman who’s just lost her husband. I've got to do something. I've got to say something. My, my, what shall I do? “Mrs. Francis, you realize what you just said?” “Yes, Judge.” “You realize this is a contempt of court?” “I sorry what I say.” “You go back to your seat. Keep quiet. Don't you ever do a thing like this again.” She bows, “Judge, you” – oh, she bows, genuflects – she's a Catholic – she genuflects and makes a sign of the cross in front of everybody and me. Quiet in the courtroom. “Judge, you nice man. You father nice man too.” And she went back, sat in her seat. What could I have said? “Next witness,” and the next witness came on. I decided the case, in the end found that Dr. Hebert was owed the money. That was an unusual situation.

BR: You found that what?

RW: That Dr. Hebert was owed the money. I found for the plaintiff, the thirty-six dollars. These are what happened. It was the last case. The court adjourned. I walked out. Clerk [inaudible] in my office and talked. I said, “Gee, did I do the right thing?” I said, “Yeah, what else could I do? What am I going to do, give the woman ten days in jail for sticking up for her son?” Is that what happened? She [inaudible] knew my father, too. When she says, “I couldn’t get mad, you a nice man, but your father” – well, I don't care if she said I'm a bad man, but if she says my father's a good man, it's all right with me. Well, I guess that's all on that now. [inaudible] next situation.

BR: Did you ever have any famous people appear before you?

RW: Many. My father before me, the most famous one he ever had was Eugene O’Neill himself, the drunk. Eugene O’Neill in those days didn't have ten cents – was poor. Great mind. No one knew about it then. Was a heavy drinker, which didn't mean anything.

BR: And what year would this be?

RW: Well, I would say this would be in war time, World War I. Speaking of that, World War I and unusual situations, Eugene O'Neill and some other artist were out at the sand dunes. My father told me this, but it happened too. And World War I – in Provincetown, everybody was under suspicion. Because Provincetown being a big port where submarines could come in – was a spy. And everybody knows everybody in Provincetown. Anybody strange, and they'd think they were doing funny things. So Eugene O'Neill and them artists was out in the dunes, and they had a sketch, and they were sketching, this artist. Someone saw them making sketches out on the dunes, and they called the police. They sent some country town policemen out there, and he watches them and he arrested them, brings them back, and locks them up. My father told me he asked the fellow afterward, "Why the hell did you lock those fellows up for? One's an artist, and the other's a writer." "Well, they were making these sketches about the ocean and submarines, boats or something." Because of the hysteria at the time – and my father says the next morning they brought the fellows upstairs, and it was Eugene O'Neill, who no one knew then anyway. Of course, he dismissed and threw the case out of court. Of course, later on those were the famous people that came before the court, my father had. I never had O'Neill myself. I had Harry Kemp, the Tramp Poet, his pal, who stayed when Eugene went to New York and became a great – he put on his plays there –a great writer. He never returned much to Provincetown, but Harry Kemp did. And Harry died in Provincetown. Harry was a more affable fellow than O'Neill. Harry was a fellow who would write poetry. When Harry Kemp would be broke half the time, I'd run into him, "What are you doing, Harry?" "I'm doing this, doing that." Harry'd go out in his dune shack and write a poem about a bird or whatever they write poetry about. He sent it to the *Saturday Evening Post*, they'd published it, and send him a couple hundred dollars. Two hundred dollars in those days was a lot of money, like five hundred today. When Harry wouldn't write any more poetry, he'd drink and have fun. When he got broke, he would sit down and write a poem again. He lived and died that way in Provincetown, Harry Kemp. Great personality. Everybody liked him.

BR: Who else did he write for, besides the *Saturday Evening Post*?

RW: That's the only one I knew about because he used to tell me sometimes he wanted to write – wanted do some writing. Of course, he was the first notable client I had as a lawyer because I could practice law when I was first a judge. Part-time judge they used to call me. I was cutting my grass one day in the east end of the town. I had a nice home. I was thirty-three when I was married, got a mortage and a nice house. A couple of the children had been born. I'm cutting my grass for exercise. Harry coming by, he's half jigged. "Bob, how are you?" "Hi Harry, how are you?" "I'm in a hell of a mess," he said. The chief of police, the new chief of police up there, [inaudible] Madeline or whatever her name was, a red-headed girl. [inaudible]. Everybody knew it. But this chief of police, someone wrote him a letter about it, and he was going to do something about it. I said, "Oh, forget it." Well, anyway, nothing happened at that time. He said to me, "The chief says if I get married, he won't bother me in the shack in the dunes." So he married (Marie?) or whatever her name was. I knew her, but I can't think of her name; she was a red head. He hadn't been married four months. He comes by the yard one day. "Bob, got a hell of a problem." "What's the matter?" "We don't get along. Since I got married, it's hell to pay." It's the way he talked. "What do you mean? Because you're married?" "Yeah. She don't like it that way. She's tied down. She says, 'I'm no good anyway. And I'm better off …'" "What do

you want?” “I want a divorce.” Well, nobody knew much about me. I said, “Gee,” [inaudible] money. He says, “I don’t got any money.” “That’s alright, Harry.” “How much it cost?” “A hundred dollars.” “I have fifty dollars.” “Do you trust me?” Sure. So I get the case. She didn't contest the case. So I knew then I was Harry Kemp's lawyer, so I go up to probate court with my little bag and Harry – I said, “Now Harry, we’re going to walk in; there's going to be a lot of photographers there.” “Wow, that's good. You’ll get your name in the paper, Bob.” I said, “Sure. He said, “Me too. I don't give a damn.” So we’re walking through. I could see [inaudible] court – go to the probate court. I see a lot of people, but I saw three or four fellows with cameras. So there's a way you go around the front, and they wouldn't see you. Harry says, “Go to the front.” I said, “No, no. You’re supposed to go to this door; it’s the court entrance.” I lied to Harry. So along with my bag, Harry – because he liked that stuff too. We [inaudible] click, click, click, and I'm walking in, so we could put him on the stand. Old Judge (Campbell?) was the judge – nice fellow, an old Protestant. But had to go through the motions when you have an uncontested – “You got a name?” “Harry Kemp.” The judge – “You’re known as the Tramp Poet?” “You're right, your honor.” “Okay. Proceed, Mr. Welsh.” [inaudible] told about how he got married and couldn't get along with [inaudible] divorce.

BR: And what year was this?

RW: Pick up the paper the next day; there’s my picture with Harry. Up to this day, I haven't got my money. He’d go by the house. “You know,” he says, “I'm going to sober up and write a poem and get three or four hundred dollars, and I'm going to pay you a hundred and fifty dollars.” I say, “Okay, Harry.”

BR: Never came around.

RW: No.

BR: What year was this?

RW: Well, I would say about ‘37 or ’38, could be 1940. I was married, had a couple of children at the time.

BR: Were there many divorces in those days?

RW: Not as many as now. Yes. Among that group –well, in that group, they didn’t have divorces; they were married. Provincetown is a pretty liberal town. I mean, not the town. I mean, everybody knew Harry Kemp. If it had been Jimmy Smith – these art students, these people go there, and they go in a cottage, shack up, whatever they do. You get the cottage for, say, three hundred dollars up in the back of the town. You get cheap rent. [inaudible] costs. Those days, you get a little woodshed in the back of the Provincetown [that] some old fisherman will let you for two hundred dollars. Well, that's two hundred. If you get [inaudible], you'll be a hundred apiece. [inaudible].

BR: Where was the courthouse that you sat?

RW: In the town hall.

BR: Is it the same –?

RW: It was always the courthouse until they built a new courthouse in Orleans. We sat in Provincetown and three days in Provincetown, three days in Harwich, the last of it. Finally, got a new courthouse. Of course, I feel happy about that because I think I'm responsible. They would never have had the courthouse if it weren't for me. Now we're back to politics again.

BR: How were you instrumental in getting the courthouse?

RW: Well, we tried. The county tried. Everybody tried. As I previously said, I sat for twenty-five years in the Superior Court in Boston. I'd live at the Hotel Bellevue; it's right out the [inaudible] Parker House. I'd have to stay there – couldn't go home nights. So I'd sit in the lobbies, and I'd know some people who'd come by. Finally, I met a young fellow named John F.X. [Francis Xavier] Davoren, who was a Representative from Milford. He had gone to Holy Cross, and we became friendly because we went to Holy Cross. We'd go out to dinner at night. He later became the majority leader. Finally became Speaker of the House. Then he became Secretary of State. As you know, he was finally defeated a few years – but anyway, great fellow. So talked to him one night in a restaurant. He said, "Gee, [inaudible] to Provincetown. You got a courthouse down there, and you ought to have a nice courthouse. They're talking about they'd like to have a courthouse in Orleans because it's geographically in the center." Of course, Provincetown people didn't want that. Anyway, I said, "Gee, that would be great." They filed bills and can't get them, and so forth. "You want a new courthouse?" This is one of my closest friends – he got to be. I said, "Sure." "Well, I think I'll be Speaker next year. I'll run for Speaker of the House." More powerful than the governor. Get it? [inaudible] the Speaker of the Congress. He's more powerful than Carter. People don't know that, but he is. Anyway, Jack became the Speaker of the House. They appointed him. If the Speaker wants it, it goes. If you are from the Cape, and he can't get your vote – Republican? He don't need your vote now. But he could get Republicans too. So he files the bill for a million dollars at the courthouse. Somebody hears in the other court they filed a bill for a million – some other lawyer or somebody. So the thing came up as the two bills. Jack says, "Yeah, but yours is going to pass." "Why?" He says, "Because I'm going to file it myself. I'll sign the bill." That's unusual. Bill in the (Seventh?) District court signed John F. Davoren, Speaker. You don't have to have everybody sign, just the Speaker.

BR: That's it.

RW: The county has sent one in for the other court. Well, bar associates, more lawyers in Hyannis – they wrote in for that court, not mine. The [inaudible] called me aside. He said, "What do you think?" I said, "Well, if you're going to get it, now's the time." There's only going to be one because of money budgets. One court's going to go on this year. Every year, they put a couple full-time and also courthouses. So he got me a full-time judgeship. Now he says, "I'm going to get you a courthouse, a new courthouse." And they needed it. So my bill went through, and they started our courthouse. The following year, Judge Murphy got his. So that's how we got the courthouse. I say me – Jack Davoren was my friend, and also a friend of

[inaudible] Murphy. He said, "Sure. Murphy can have his. Next year's all right with me. You'll get yours." So I figured that I am the one responsible. I don't care [inaudible]. Anyone who knows politics would know that. County [inaudible] is all Republicans. They're all friends of mine, don't get me wrong. But Jack just called him, and he says, "Well, gentlemen, Judge Welsh's court's going to be [inaudible] court." I had it two years, and I retired.

BR: You mentioned earlier that the courts were very informal when you started.

RW: Yeah, very. District courts are informal because they're known as the people's court. You have a smaller type of case, but you have the people who go to court; you go to the district court. The Superior and Supreme Court, you got to have money to do this. You need a lot of money to get in these higher courts. People's court – no lawyers, half of them.

BR: When did the courts start to change, would you say?

RW: Well, they were made full-time. These courts? I was made a full-time court. [Recording paused.] I was made a full-time court during the administration of Governor [John] Furcolo. Governor Furcolo of Peabody. I've forgotten now was – but anyway, was instrumental through the intervention, so to speak, of the Speaker of the House, John F.X. Davoren, who I previously mentioned, who now I believe is a lobbyist for the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] and the AFL [American Federation of Labor]. After he was defeated, he went and became a lobbyist. In fact, he's in a much better paying job now than he had as Secretary of State. But like everything, he was disappointed to lose, but his wife is very happy about it. She's happy now; he doesn't have to go out nights or – you know what I mean? He had a good job. But that's it. So I do take that for the record that the courthouse in Orleans was through my personal intervention, no question about it. Don't want to brag about it. Those are the facts of life. Because the Speaker of the House is very important. In other words, like in Washington, as you know, all money bills to spend must originate in the House of Representatives, not in the Senate. The Speaker, if he says no, it's very difficult. I know "Tip" [Thomas] O'Neill. He has a place in Harwich Port – quite a fellow. His son is the Lieutenant Governor.

BR: His nephew is [inaudible]?

RW: What?

BR: [inaudible]

RW: He's nephew to who?

BR: Kevin [inaudible].

RW: Oh, yes, I know Kevin, but I didn't know he was – how I know Kevin is – I don't know him well, but see, I was a good friend of Dick Staff's who used to be town council. Now Judge Staff.

BR: He's a judge now?

RW: Yeah, he's a judge in the First District Court along with Judge (Curley?) and Judge (Ardita?) who is the special judge in our court. He's a special, one of the few remaining, and [inaudible] because he's a full-time judge like myself. It was Bob who succeeded me. It was an unusual situation. Was not politically inspired because he's a different type of person.

BR: Why would you say –?

RW: It's difficult for me to speak of the situation because he is my son. I don't want to be embarrassed, but he's a great scholar. Very interesting [inaudible] – I don't know if it'll be interesting or not. I became seventy years of age, and I had to retire. I didn't want to because I enjoyed the job, and I was in good health, still am, thank the Lord. Young Bob, my son, came to me. He said, "Dad, eight or ten are looking for the job down there in the Orleans district court. I'm going to put my name in as a candidate." I said, "Bob, you want some advice?" He said, "Sure, Dad. What?" I said, "You and Dick Staff have that office in Hyannis. You're doing well." He was getting a lot of business. "You're a town counselor in Dennis. It's a big town now. Big job. You're a Democrat. Sargent is the governor. You didn't vote for Sargent. I didn't." Not that I don't like Sargent. I think Governor Sargent is one of the finest governors we ever had. As a person, a real personality. Warm. Get it?

BR: He is. He's my neighbor.

RW: Yeah. I know he is. I'm a Democrat. Kevin White was one. Not that I think so much of Kevin White, but he could have handled the job, too. He's mayor [inaudible] former Secretary of State. So I vote the Democrat ticket. "You I know [inaudible] I know you're a Democrat." He said, "Yeah, I voted for Kevin White. I knew Sargent, don't just like him." "First of all, the people that will be running [inaudible] Republican, will say, 'Why give it to young Welsh?' His grandfather had the job; he's a Democrat. His father, who just retired after forty-one years, is a Democrat. [inaudible] had it. This fellow is a Democrat. He's the son of the judge who retired and the grandson of the other. It's the democratic regime in the Cape for ninety years. What are our Republican friends going to say? Give a break to a Republican." "I know, dad. I probably won't get it, but I'm going to try anyway. I'll get my name in the paper, [and] get a little publicity. I said, "Well, I'm telling you this so you won't be disappointed. As a matter of fact, you're doing well anyway. Because from the money angle, an active lawyer who does well makes more money than the judge." Not all the lawyers. There are lawyers in the Cape I don't think would be interested in being judges – I don't want to mention their names. At least ten who are making forty and fifty and sixty thousand dollars a year. Why take a job that's paying thirty?" Get it?

BR: Yes.

RW: Of course, there are exceptions because when you get older, money is one nice thing to have, but your wife – or socially, you'd like to top it off. Well, I can take a twenty-thousand-dollar or ten-thousand-dollar cut of salary, do something that I like and be judge X. So, much to my surprise, Bob got the job. I would say that was not a political appointment. We didn't vote for the governor. I didn't contribute. Bob didn't, and Bob has never been active. He isn't political. He doesn't like politics. He's a student. I am not a student, but it has nothing to do with

the [inaudible], but I'm giving you the – so that now makes it, as you know publicly, my father had the job twenty years, whatever. I had it for forty, forty-one years. Bob has been there now [for] five years. For sixty-odd years, sixty-five years, a Welsh has been the presiding judge of the Second District Court of Provincetown. But they laugh when they can't blame that on me. A fellow says to me – you know what I mean – "maybe his father helped him." I didn't dare help him.

BR: The appointments are not so political anymore.

RW: No, I agree to that, what you say. Today, they are not so political. They're political.

BR: But not as much.

RW: Oh, no. No. Dukakis – Governor [Michael] Dukakis. Sargent set up a screening committee. I think Sargent was the first governor to do that. Anyone who wants to go has got to go through a screen of eight to ten men, whoever they are, who were set up. Yes, they have that today, too.

BR: What? To approve –?

RW: Bob had to go through that, and Dick Staff had to go through that. You write into them, and you send them all these – they ask you about sixty-five questions [about] your background, type of cases you have. I remember Dick Staff filling his out. Town Councilor of Mashpee, and so forth. Then on that, they picked three from, say this ten in the group that applied. Those three are the ones submitted to the governor. He will appoint one of those three. But you're still – you can't get away from the political aspect. Because let's assume you're governor – assume I'm a governor. I'm a Republican or [Democrat] – either, but I've been elected by certain people who worked for me and worked hard for me. There's the screen. They take three people. All right. One is John Jones, we call him Jim Smith, and Joe Bloke, whoever he is. There's three [that] qualify, no question about that probably. But Jim Jones's friends write to the governor, endorsing him, and the governor has these endorsements. He's got to appoint one of the three, but one of the three happens to be a fellow that voted for him or worked for him, who had a right to do that. Well, if he's a human being – for instance, let's assume the other two worked against you, says you shouldn't be governor, and they're the opposite party or whatever it might be. Now here's a fellow who's a member of your party, who's as qualified as the other, but the only thing against him [is] he voted for you or worked for you. Therefore, I won't appoint him. Well, if I would've done it, I'd appoint the fellow who worked for me. Now, Dukakis claims he doesn't do that. He claims that. I don't know. I don't know. He claims he appoints a fellow that turns out he worked for him, he said it just happened to be, but not because he worked for him. Well, it is a pretty fine distinction as to why a man does a thing. And if he does that, that's all right too. But why should you punish the person who assisted you if he's qualified? You can stretch that to a point –

BR: Hard decision to make.

RW: – of no return. But I would say the overall picture you got to get on that list. Dick Staff – I'm familiar with that situation, was on the list, one of the three. Dick tried before with Judge (Curley?). He didn't get it with Dukakis. Dick felt bad. He said, “We’ll try again.” I was very happy for Dick Staff, naturally, because he's a great person, very humble person – right, but humble. Humility, in my opinion, as a judge, as a schoolteacher, as a businessman, as a person, is the first qualification. Humility. Because you got to have ability. But I don't say ability – humility and ability.

BR: Do you have hopes of your grandson being a judge?

RW: No, but an interesting story, speaking of my grandson. When young Bob was made a judge, he put on a little reception over at the Wychmere Harbor Club. Sargent came down, Jack Davoren, all our friends and families, and people. There must have been three or four hundred people. So I'm sitting there with – Bob's up there at the head table, of course, young Bob with Natalie Welsh, my daughter-in-law; that's Bob's wife, and Robert A. Welsh III, and Natalie’s other child, Anastasia. I got so many grandchildren, I can't think. But anyway, we were all there with our family groups, my sister, my little daughter who just came in, and sitting at the table. So Sargent gets up and had a testimonial; everybody's a great fellow. He gets up and says, [inaudible] what developed over there, now, as I recall it. Yes, I guess I was up there too at the head table. We had a little – yeah, I guess I was.

BR: You were?

RW: Yes. And there's Bob there, the governor and Jack Davoren, and Judge Murphy, and different people around, the locals. Yeah. Sargent gets up and makes his speech, a little talk. And he said how he knew me and so forth and so forth. He said, “The only thing I got against Judge Welsh is he’s a Democrat,” kidding and so forth and so on. But he said, “I appointed Bob Welsh because he's the best qualifier of the six candidates, in my opinion.” So it was not a political appointment. He didn’t say, “I know you’re a Welsh.” He didn’t know because he didn’t know. You know what I mean? And not only him, me. It worked out. That's what he said. Oh, then he said, “By the way, they say his grandfather was a judge, his father, now he's a judge. Now I understand in the audience” – he pointed over to Natalie and the young Robert Welsh III, who was about – in those days, he was about ten, I guess – nine. He had him stand up. “There Robert A. Welsh III. Now I predict in 2029, Robert A. Welsh III will be the next judge in this court.” Just interesting. Well, what else would you like to add? I don't want to get into these things, but the human-interest stories in my life have been tremendous. To have my father, myself, and my own son [inaudible] it’s a difficult thing to describe. The only embarrassing thing was when they gave me a little banquet when I retired over in Orleans at the (Nell?) House. Of course, they [inaudible] what a great fellow I am because Bob’s sitting down at the other end. They can't give a banquet to a judge now. There's new rules on that.

BR: Something recent, huh?

RW: Yeah, but when you retire, you can. Anyway, he's sitting on the other end, and they give his – I think Morris (Goldman?) was the master of ceremonies, a very bright lawyer, been around, knows life, seventy-seven or eight years old. They began to talk and this and that, this

and that. They called on different ones. So [inaudible] Then they called on – I was the last. They called on Bob, young Bob. It was a little embarrassing for him with his father there. He's a young judge, and he's not a – I won't say a public – he's a good speaker, but he doesn't go for this business, see? But he got up and did a nice little talk. Very good. I thought very good.

[Recording paused.]

RW: – already being changed. First of all, the courts were part-time courts. The judges, as I say, like myself, district court judges, you could be into – way back into little bit policies. Not supposed to be too much, but there was no real rule against it because the judge – you could be like little part-time politics. You're a part-time judge; you're a part-time lawyer. So ten or fifteen years ago, they said, "Let's help to keep the courts out of politics." Let's make them all full-time judges, but you got to pay them the money to compensate them. When I first started to judge, you got three thousand dollars a year.

BR: What year was that?

RW: In 1933. Well, that wasn't bad.

BR: You were allowed to practice then?

RW: When you got six children, a wife, and sixty dollars a week, you've got to. So you're allowed to practice certain types of law, mainly estates. But when you're the judge, the town, you generally get the – they figured, "Well, they don't want the Lawyer Smith. They want Lawyer Welch because he's a judge." It helps your business, no question about it. Put me on the bank. I got on the bank when I was a judge. Became president of the bank. Not because it's me.

BR: What bank did you become president of?

RW: Seamen's Savings, which, as I previously mentioned, or if I didn't mention it, it's the oldest savings bank in the Cape. It's a hundred and thirty-four years old. It's the first bank because they didn't need savings banks up here. Started by Lysander Paine, who owned a lot of fishing vessels.

BR: In Provincetown?

RW: Yeah. The first commercial bank, I believe, was the Falmouth National Bank up here, this way. National bank. The first savings bank in Cape Cod was Seamen's Savings Bank.

BR: You said they didn't need savings banks in those days?

RW: No, didn't have the people. It takes money and people to have a bank; got to get a charter first of all. You get a charter, you got to show you can put some money and get some people, cooperators. Well, the big town on the Cape a hundred and thirty-three years ago was Provincetown. The money was in Provincetown. The whalers were in Provincetown. The cod

fishermen were in Provincetown. Forty vessels out of Provincetown. Probably two vessels out of Yarmouth of Falmouth – none out of Hyannis.

BR: That much difference?

RW: You couldn't get a vessel in there, little pond there in the harbor. Provincetown. You had the Navy there. Money was there. And people – five, six thousand people in those days. Then the automobile changed the whole thing around. But the courts, making them full-time, cost a lot of money. Worth it because it's fair to the lawyers. It's unfair [inaudible] be the judge today and tomorrow be a lawyer [inaudible], trying a case with Frank Richard or Jim Smith. You're embarrassed in the court. Because when you're trying a case, you're a lawyer; he's your enemy in that sense. Well, Brother Smith, (Ardito?) don't know anything about it. You can't get up to the other judge – "Well, Judge (Ardito's?) wrong. That's not the law. You ought to know better (Ardito?)" – something like that. The next day, you're going to be before him. So that is another year – if this reform goes through, be all over. Judge one hundred percent. But you got to pay him. Now, why should you pay him? Sure, you'll get judges who will work for ten thousand dollars a year – lawyers who can't get any business. You're going to pay the judge the money so that he'd be independent financially. Now, judges make mistakes and [inaudible] judge now they're on trial, receive justice [inaudible] Superior Court. First time in three hundred years. It happens. Some other judge – judges being indicted in three hundred years, probably a dozen. Yes. But how many bankers have been indicted in three hundred years? How many so and so's are indicted? Businessmen and politicians. The percentage is very low because of the tradition of the bench. But the human being – anything can happen.

BR: I'd like to talk about prohibition and rum-running.

RW: Well, I remember a little of that because I was in high school – well, high school – rum running. I was a young lawyer when it started because I was a young lawyer in '28. Hoover was in. Was it Hoover? I forget now. Sure. They passed that in Hoover's days. Herbert Hoover.

BR: Hoover what? Hoover days?

RW: Sure. Didn't they? I don't know.

BR: What was Hoover Days?

RW: The Republicans – the Democrats would never pass that. They didn't start that. The Democrats took it out of – Roosevelt changed the whole thing around.

BR: What was the Hoover Days?

RW: See, all the Republicans were the presidents in those days. You had Calvin Coolidge and what's his name? Herbert Hoover. Then, in comes prohibition. 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran and knocked off who, I don't know, whoever it was. Swept the country. Everything happened. Remember? I remember very well. You wouldn't remember. I forget. Frank Roosevelt be here by Christmas if you elect me. He gets in in '33, passes the special act, had

beer in thirty days. And just the country went democratic. Don't get me wrong. It was a mistake, but it was cleared up.

BR: What do you remember about rum running in Provincetown?

RW: Well, I don't remember much about Provincetown except some of the characters involved. Portuguese fellow down there, I forgot what they used to call him now; I knew him well. He had a little gasoline boat, and he'd go out [to] the rum-runners and bring it ashore. See, the small boats would get in these – you have to go to the mothership, so-called, beyond the twelve-mile limit. Load up the young – fish draggers are small boats. Would go into inlets, like Rock Harbor or Bass River, and places. That's all I remember that they were active in that. I only know that because my father told me. But I was like seventeen, eighteen years old.

BR: Did you ever have any rum-runners come in your court?

RW: Yes, we used to get them. How we'd get them – when I went on in '33, just before it was changed, I had a few, because fish trucks and some, they'd transport the liquor. You could get them federally, but you could get them in the state court too for transporting liquor illegally in your car or trunk or whatever it might be. Didn't have much. We had some of it. But it began to change after I was in '33. I was only a little while in prohibition.

BR: Would they be fined for being caught?

RW: Oh, sure. Oh, for transport again, I'd take the truck and take it up to [inaudible], state troopers would catch you or federal agents. They could take you in the federal court or the state court. Many crimes also were federal crimes and state crimes. So that works out. Yes, I remember. But they'd go out to these boats and get the liquor and so forth. Off Provincetown, one one of them ashore there [inaudible]. One of them was a vessel come over from Nova Scotia, carrying liquor, and she ran aground off of Race Point. The hulk of it's still under the sand, I guess. They landed on the shores in [inaudible] small boats. But the big ships were offshore, and the small boats could go fishing, wouldn't be fishing – would go out, go alongside the boat, and get their hundred cases. They knew the little harbors they could get into, and the big coast guard boats couldn't get in there anyways once you get in the inlet. Some got caught; some didn't. It's a very difficult thing to enforce. I suppose that's why it was changed. Not too much in this district court and the state courts; they had them in the federal courts.

BR: What did you do for our entertainment when you were a boy? You mentioned dances before.

RW: Well, when I was a teenager, I liked to dance. Go to public dances.

BR: Do you remember the first movie you saw?

RW: No. I remember the movies, cowboy pictures, but I wouldn't know the titles. No.

BR: How about dating and courting in those days?

RW: I liked girls, things like that. Everyone likes to dance. If you like to dance, even if you're not good-looking – tall and a good dancer, a man, I don't care if he's homely, a girl will like to dance with him. Why? Because she likes to dance. She likes to see people – it's a public place. You are not there for a husband; you're there to dance. If you've got a fellow who can dance, if he's a bum or whatever – not an alcoholic – whatever he might be, that girl will dance with him, even if her father or mother go home. My father would say, "Your sister or something, that fellow she danced with – he's a tough nut." My sister would say, "Gee, mother, but he can dance." The boy, the same way. I would look for who could dance in the hall. Because as you get older, you get a favorite one, but when you [inaudible] freedom, you'll go to the dancer if you're a good dancer. Of course, if you're not a dancer – you always want someone who can dance better than you. So I enjoyed it very much. Now, Bobby, my son, isn't into dancing. My mother's a great dancer. Musical part of it comes back from my mother, not my father.

BR: What did you use for means of transportation when you first started dating?

RW: I'd take my father's automobile.

BR: Oh, you had automobiles then?

RW: Oh, you had to beg and be home certain times and all that. When I first started, I didn't have the car. I mean, he wouldn't let the kids – as you get older.

BR: Do you remember the first automobile?

RW: My father had? Sure. It was an old Pope-Hartford 1910.

BR: What kind?

RW: 1910 a Pope-Hartford. About three years old. Couldn't afford to buy a new one.

BR: How much did they cost in 1910?

RW: He told me – I forget. It was about three hundred and eighty dollars or something.

BR: What did it look like?

RW: Funny-looking thing. I had a picture of it, [but] lost it now. Didn't have any top. You'd go riding Sundays on the old dirt roads in those days. You'd get all dusty and [inaudible]. The kids would put on these little – what they call them – dusters, I guess. Women wore them over their hats. I lost this picture. I'd like to have it now. My mother would be sitting in front with my father, his big Derby, and she'd have lace – I don't know what you'd call it. It goes over the nice hat, the flowered hat. The picture – we kids in the car, no top on. There was only three or four cars in town. My father was that type. He wasn't wealthy, but automobile – he'd have the best horse or a car because the best car was brand new, owned by the doctor [inaudible] some doctor – (Curley?) had the first car. About three cars.

BR: (Curley?) [inaudible]?

RW: Dr. (Curley?). My father [inaudible]. He didn't have any money. He wasn't on welfare, but if he had four hundred dollars in the bank, he'd buy the car. Take it out. [inaudible]

BR: You mentioned the family parlor.

RW: Family what?

BR: Parlor?

RW: Well, a parlor in the house. A room that you only use for Christmas, or entertain your wealthy friends, or friends that come out of town. Go in the parlor on Sundays I guess. It was a room where kids were never allowed in. I guess that was true all-over New England, not only Provincetown, I would say because that soon went out of existence. In my case, my father [inaudible], there was a bedroom there that the whole [inaudible] like a living room. It was a place more of sadness, I guess, and then you'd be laid out there if you were buried. That was just changing. Been only a few, eight, or ten years of being in funeral homes. I used to remember my father and mother say – my mother [inaudible], Oh, remember Mary Reagan or Mary McCarthy died?" "Yeah." "What do you suppose her husband did? They got her down in the rest home. They're going to have the funeral down there. Isn't that awful?" Times have changed.

BR: Times are changing?

RW: Well, it's custom, I suppose. They did the same thing in Europe years ago, I don't know.

BR: What did the parlor look like?

RW: The nicest room, the cleanest room. It had the best furniture, the easy chairs. Nice rug. There were shades. If it was expensive, if you could afford to go in the parlor. The living room had the cheapest things. The best things in the parlor. Nice sofa. Old, but nice.

BR: You remember the first telephone you had?

RW: Yeah, we had a telephone. I always remember – I never remember when we didn't have a telephone.

BR: You always had one?

RW: Yeah. When my father was in business. And lights the same thing.

BR: Lights. Indoor plumbing?

RW: Yeah. We had indoor, yes. I remember my relatives [inaudible] outhouses in Provincetown. I remember myself in my house because we weren't wealthy, but we were, I suppose, not blue blood, whatever you'd call it. My father was a businessman and –

BR: Could afford it?

RW: Yeah. See what I mean? In other words, if there were only ten people [who] could afford it, nine would have money, but he'd do anything to keep up with the other guy. Get one too, like electric lights when they first [inaudible]. Not the first one, but if there were a dozen houses had lights, he was in the first twelve. Not [inaudible], but the poorest of the twelve at that time. Go on a vacation, my father, kids – my mother would be all excited. Go to the best hotel. [inaudible] I can't go. We stayed home. Go every two years. [inaudible] want to go big.

BR: Where would you go on vacation?

RW: Well, White Mountains, things like that. The kids in the old [inaudible] break down the car, and all that stuff. My mother – "We don't want to stay a week. Let's go home. It costs too much." My father said, "Well, when I get broke, we go home." That was his type. But my mother's the success – [inaudible] if it hadn't been for my mother, we kids would never have gone to – he never saved the money to put us through college. Money wasn't everything.

BR: Did you have any characters in Provincetown that you remember?

RW: Now? Well, the only character I remember [inaudible] Fat Francis was a character.

BR: The older days when you were a boy growing up?

RW: No, not too many. Well, old John (Holloway?) was an old – most of the characters were all drinkers. You know what I mean? And this folk John (Holloway?) didn't marry. Good fellow. Worked when he wanted to, lived with his people. Nice disposition. John (Holloway?). Old Yankee drunk for a change – would change back from the Portuguese. Make it even, in that sense. [inaudible] I knew him well. I became a judge as a young kiddo. I was all embarrassed. Oh, I liked him. He talked to you. I had to send him up to Barnstable. I'll never forget. He wrote me a letter. This comes to me now. "Dear Bob, do you know I've been here now ten days? They say I got to stay twenty days." I had sent him up there thirty days. Yes. "Would you come see me?" I went to the jail. The old jailor [said], "You don't want to go in there, Judge." I said, "I want to go in." The man cried that the judge came in to see him. I went down to see county commissioners. "Do you want to go?" Sure. "File a petition; put your name on it." So I went right in the cell. I never told many people that. I would tell them now, but you meet these other judges; they say, "You shouldn't have done that." Little things like that. Not worth for historical; it's more of my own background, I guess. But I had a lot of experience because, as I said, I went on the court for twenty-five years. Of course, I was up in the city of Boston – big lawyers and things.

BR: Do you remember the fishing fleet in Provincetown?

RW: Yes. But it began to die out as a teenager. In fact, I remember my father had what they call a portion or part of a vessel. He knew one of these – Captain (Gasper?) his name was. I remember the man. He was a captain, very successful, and he needed some money and got a mortgage. He gave my father a seventh of this boat. He owned six-sevenths. Made money. It was a good little investment. But when they get enough money, they'd buy you out of seven. You don't have to sell. But yes, I remember those people. He could hardly read or write this man. He was a navigator and captain of the vessel.

BR: How big was the vessel?

RW: Oh, I would say one hundred and forty feet, two-mast – a schooner. Go to Grand Banks, and he couldn't read. He learned how to sign his name [and] went to a night school down there. How they ever – they're just born navigators, Portuguese people. Another interesting story, he was a very proud man. He had the biggest house in town, made good money. He'd sit at the window with a big lamp. Open it up, and he'd have a newspaper. I'd go take a ride around town at night, my mother and us kids, and my father would go by Captain Gasper's house.

My mother saying to my father one night, "Wal, there's Frank Gasper" – that's the captain of the vessel you own – "in his house, reading the paper." My mother said, "Gee, I understand he can't read." "That's right. He can't read." "Well, he's reading the paper." "That's right, but he can't read. He's probably got it upside down." She said, "Why would he do that?" "Well, he's a very proud man." Captain Gasper could write his name and talk English and read a little. He was the type of some of these other confrères in the fishing business, say, "Gee, Captain Gasper reads the newspaper." That's an incident –

BR: Proud.

RW: I remember so well. But very proud. If that fellow had had the education, the opportunity, he'd be a governor or something. He had it in him, see?

BR: Why'd you say they were born navigators, the Portuguese?

RW: Well, I don't know why. Well, all the Portuguese people went to sea, for one thing. Not all of them. The little I know about Portugal is the livelihood outside of Lisbon, those little towns in those countries in the Azores Islands, what could you do? You could be a farmer or a fisherman. Those who didn't like farming went fishing. If you lived near the water, you became a fisherman. So naturally, the navigators would come from fishermen, learn charts, and so forth.

BR: Do you remember them unloading the boats when you were a boy?

RW: Yes. Well, most of the big fishing vessels unloaded in Boston. Once in a great while, they'd come to Provincetown; that's when the fish freezers came. About 1915. And the fish would be so plentiful they started fish freezers because they'd take the fish to Boston – Provincetown vessels and other vessels. They wouldn't get any money for fresh fish, one cent a pound or something. So then these men were bankers. This crowd, they'd give money to these fellows and built fish freezers. So when the fish was fresh and priced good, they'd go into town.

If it wasn't good, they'd come into Provincetown and sell it a cent more, and they put it in the fish freezer and freeze the fish. In the winter, when people don't go fishing much, they'd sell the frozen fish and ship it out west.

RW: You'd get a much better price then?

BR: Oh, sure. Because the ordinary fellow can't tell the difference between fresh or frozen. I can. I think I can. You get to St. Louis and those places, wherever you are, you can get it today, but not in those days. Today with [inaudible] – my daughter, Mary, teaches in California, and she gets lobster out there. She goes with her boyfriend – I hear he's got some money. They didn't marry each other. I wonder why she – but anyway. She says he does pretty well. The big thing is – she'll go out – "order anything you want" and everything, and he'll get lobster, and she'll get lobster. I forget what she said; it's twenty-two dollars or something, twenty-three dollars. They fly it right in from Boston. They have lobsters out there, but not the kind – they call them crawfish or something; it tastes different.

BR: Not the Maine lobsters, New England lobsters?

RW: Today, they can fly fish out. They can truck fish, especially lobsters. If it's a lobster, you keep them on ice, and it lasts longer. But I'm not too familiar with the fish business. See, my father wasn't a fisherman, but my mother's people were fishermen.

BR: What year did you graduate from high school?

RW: Back in 1921. Graduated college [in] 1925. Graduated from Boston University Law School in 1928. Ordinary person. Four years and three. As I said, my dad went through in two and became a lawyer. Never went to college, but he was quite a guy. See, I wasn't the self-made man in that sense. I had opportunities. I was sent to college. My father paid the bill. Don't get me wrong; I worked summers. Hell, that wouldn't pay [for] your college.

BR: Where'd you work at?

RW: Hot dogs.

BR: Every summer?

RW: No. As I got older, I did different types of jobs. Oh, when I went to college, I began to – my father put me on, so I'd learn about the court. Temporary clerk. Clerk would – summer, they had [inaudible] they'd hire me. [inaudible] sixty dollars a month or something. I didn't want to do the job. I'd rather sell hot dogs and make more money. My father said, "No, you get to learn something there." I took my father's advice. I was smart. Then I became a temporary clerk. The real clerk would take the whole summer off when I went to college. He'd get two months' vacation. I get only one month's pay. I said, "Well, I'll show you how to do it." The clerk could do that because he didn't have to show me.

BR: What did the clerk have to –?

RW: Nights, I spent with my father in the town hall, learning that. I went into college and law school. So when I get out of law school, I go and try cases. My first case, I was nervous, but not too nervous. I had a wonderful opportunity, but I had the sense enough to take advantage of it.

BR: What did you do when you worked as a clerk?

RW: You do the whole thing – handle all the money –

BR: Same as today?

RW: – make all the entries, file all the civil papers. The civil papers – this thing was more difficult. You got to be a bookkeeper, a fairly good bookkeeper. I didn't know. It's very difficult. You got nine towns; each town has a [inaudible] a fellow's fined ten dollars for assault and battery in Harwich. Where are you going to put the ten dollars? What town? Put it in Harwich because it happened there. That's the general rule. Then you have a county account [and] state account. Automobiles used to go to the state. Other things would go to the county.

BR: Is it that way today?

RW: Yeah. Little changes, but yeah, [inaudible] big cash book the clerk has. A lot of judges don't know this – a lot of judges don't know that. They know the law, but they don't know how the cash is distributed. I happened to [inaudible]. I have no reason to. I go to fine a fellow fifty dollars, a hundred dollars in Boston; I go home. [inaudible] money. I knew some agency gets it, and that's [inaudible]. They don't teach you that in law school. That's not law. Anybody can be a bookkeeper, don't get [inaudible] anybody. No, not anybody. You got to be a bookkeeper. I couldn't be because I don't like books and figures. Anybody can be a lawyer but not a good lawyer. Any intelligent person can be a lawyer if they wanted. You got to have an overall picture. A great lawyer, in my opinion, is also an actor. He's got to be an actor. I was not a great lawyer; don't get me wrong. Don't get me wrong, see? I was [inaudible] little plays, but I'm not an actor. But these big lawyers, they're like these fellows you see in the movies. The big ones, I mean, big cases – because it's all emotion. [inaudible] not the judge [inaudible] just try for a judge [inaudible] be an actor. Don't try to act in front of a judge; he's wise to you. [inaudible] law. Never mind that [inaudible] about the widows [inaudible] died and all that. What's the case that says you can't do that? But the jury – who's telling the truth? There's a human element here. You make them cry [inaudible] make them cry – sad case. I can't do that. I do a little. I was an ordinary lawyer – trial lawyer.

BR: Did most people represent themselves in the days when you first started?

RW: Oh, yes. Didn't have any public defenders. Most people were poor, as I previously mentioned at a conference, [and] couldn't afford lawyers. Go right ahead.

BR: Did they have jurors in those days?

RW: Sure, sure. Had jurors since Magna Carta in England. We take everything from England over here. Magna Carta. It's one of the few dates I remember – 1212 or something, it was adopted. See, I remember going to law school, the old professor – there's only about three dates you got to remember. Magna Carta 1212 – I put it [inaudible] about in England. Another one – well, that's when America was discovered. When Christ was born. Because you forgot what [inaudible] – I mean, the overall picture. Whether you believe in Christ or not isn't the point, whether he was good or bad. Most everyone believes it was a nice man, put it that way [inaudible]. Of course, I personally am Christian/Catholic. From a religious angle, my father's people were all Catholic, but they all didn't go to church anymore. My father's the only one who remained Catholic. So all my uncles and aunts, my fathers – all Protestant. My mother was Catholic, was Portuguese. Our children were brought up. It makes a difference. Their children were not. My uncles and aunts are [inaudible] much as anybody else. I have an idea. My overall training and background makes me so-called liberal, or whatever you call these things. I mean, I never had [inaudible] Provincetown. I'm not a conservative, politically associated, or anything else. The only [thing they] ever used against me [was] I was too liberal. I had [inaudible]. I went to see the fellow in the jail. Some of these old judges would [inaudible].

BR: Was Provincetown the only place that had a jail way back?

RW: Oh, way back, sure.

RB: In that house, the prisoners –?

RW: Provincetown jail because Provincetown, before they had a court, they just had a little place they put a fellow called a jail. The court wasn't adopted until 1890, First District Court of [inaudible]. Second District Court – you get an act of legislature that creates the courts. They have what they call justice of the peace, appointed by the governor who would hear little things in their store, or they were in the grocery store. The leader of the town is at the grocery store, the bank or whatever it might be, would be a justice of the peace. I don't remember [inaudible]. A kid's stealing apples; you go before the justice of the peace. He's a fellow in the grocery store.

BR: That was before your father's time, too, was it?

RW: Oh, sure. Yeah. Yeah. 1890 was the first court.

BR: In Provincetown?

RW: Yeah. And the first judge was – Rufus Hopkins was the [father] of Raymond Hopkins. I think, but I'm not sure.

BR: He was the father?

RW: Yeah. But I'm not sure about that. Well, we've taken a lot of our time, yours and mine. And all good things must come to an end, but I appreciate Ms. Richards, you coming over for the Tales of Cape Cod to record these events that you've asked me about. As my memory serves me, it's been an interesting situation and a little long, but the human interest in my life is so many

things happen when you ask me what happened in certain things, after forty-one years as a judge and so forth. These various things come to my mind. It's been a pleasurable thing, and I'm sure that whoever listens to this in the future will get some enjoyment out of it. I'm sure my grandchildren will, who are living here in Dennis with me. I have others, but present Judge Welsh's children, years from now, they'll get a big kick out of it. I know my father, if he were here, would get a kick out of this. Thanking you all again. Good luck to everybody. Cape Cod is still the best place to live. Thank you very much.

BR: Thank you very much, Your Honor.

RW: I want to eat just a [inaudible]. I don't know [inaudible].

---END OF INTERVIEW---
Reviewed by Molly Graham 8/25/2022