

Answering The Call:
The History Of The
Port Washington Volunteer Fire Department

Transcript Of Oral History Interview With

Tom Mahoney
Protection Engine Company No. 1

conducted in association with the
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pertaining to the subject being discussed

Q: ... interview held on February 11th, 1984, with Tom Mahoney, conducted by Peter Zwerlein at Protection Engine Company's main headquarters on South Washington Street. Okay, Tom, what we're doing for the hundredth anniversary is we're trying to get some history of the company from when it started up through the '20s, and then further on from there. Because we're missing the minutes from the beginning of the company through 1928. So, first of all, if you can give us any information that you may have heard from any of the old-time members about the beginnings of the company, or anything you may remember hearing, or the location of the firehouses, type of equipment we may have had--that type of thing.

TM: Well, I can start when I came in the fire company in 1930, which I have a good recollection of that period of time. And my application was put in by Wesley Seifts. He was a member of the company. My first meeting in the company was in July.

Q: July 1930?

TM: 1930. The company officers there at the time--Irv Foster was Foreman. Arnold Foster was 2nd Assistant Foreman, and Mount Carey was--I mean, 2nd Assistant Foreman. Arnold was 1st. And Joe Hoffer was Financial Secretary. John Lewis was Secretary. Our Trustees was Walter Crooker and Charles Gross. The meeting was in the old building--the old wooden building.

Q: That was the one that had two bay doors?

TM: It had one big door and a wooden floor in the truck room. It was even with this back room here was the floor level. Where the American LaFrance stood on a bay on the side with a slant roof on it, that was a concrete floor in there. Because this floor wouldn't hold up the truck--that truck, the American LaFrance. So, they built that extension on the side of the building.

Q: So, if you were looking at--say, standing at Main Street School, looking at the building, that extension would be to the right?

TM: On the right-hand side, next to the Odd Fellows Hall. I can remember the meeting room. It was used as a courtroom. It was Judge Jones's court and later became--Lecluse was the judge up there. But, to go back to our first meeting. I came up here as a young eighteen-year-old and was made welcome by every member in the company. And there was a lot of brothers in the company. There was the Dickinson brothers, the Wood brothers, Carpenter brothers, and Olson brothers, and, later on, it was the Mahoney brothers came in.

Q: You were the first Mahoney?

TM: I was the first Mahoney in. And ...

Q: Was your father ever involved in the ...

TM: No, he never--we lived in Sands Point, and he wasn't involved in the Fire Department. I used to look out of the Main Street School window and watch the fire trucks. I could see Bill McCarthy. He was driving a taxi at the time. Right down here. And Jimmie Dickinson, Wag Larkins there running to catch a fire truck. Mike Tolinski, Nofi [Phil]. And I said "I'm going to join that someday," which I did.

Q: Now that was--Main Street School was a high school then, right?

TM: It was then a junior high. Junior high and a high school when I went there. So, that was my interest in the fire company. When--after I got in, my first tournament was Mineola Fair. It was fair day over there, and they always had fireman's day at Mineola Fair. So, that was the first time I ever rode on a fire truck was going to Mineola Fair. My first fire I attended to, I rode on the Atlantic's truck that they had--an old Reliable Hook & Ladder. Our trucks consisted of the American LaFrance, a Laraby truck, which was a great little truck. It was a hose truck. And it could go on a straight road. But in the hills, it would die, until it got new--rear-ended in later years. After that truck I was just telling Pete before, it had a little pig whistle on it--on the exhaust. And you could hear that pig whistle all over town when she was coming. And then we had a Pierce Arrow in this

building. The Pierce Arrow we used for a racing truck, plus the hose truck and went to fires with. It always carried about four or five men. And the LaFrance was all brass. All the--there was no chrome on it; it was all brass. It all had to be polished by hand. And one thing nice about it. It was out there getting washed, getting cleaned up for a parade, everyone did their share polishing brass. The fire extinguishers, the lanterns. You could see, if you look at some of the old pictures, you'll see lant--kerosene lanterns on the side of the truck. They had to--soda and acid, they used. When I came in here, they'd done away with the soda and acid, and they used what they called DuGas. It was a dry chemical.

Q: It was a powder then.

TM: It was a powder. But, do away with the soda and acid because it was eating the equipment, the bodies on the truck. And they'd done away with that; it was harmful to anything it touched, like raincoats or that ...

Q: You mentioned that everybody used to get together, and they'd do their share on the trucks.

TM: You wouldn't have to ask them.

Q: Yeah. Was this--this was more or less the center of everybody's life back then.

TM: That's right.

Q: Yeah.

TM: It was during the Depression. If people went through the Depression years, they would appreciate what the firehouse did. It was an education in the firehouse. It was comradeship. If there's anyone in trouble, you was always ready to help him. If the ambulance call came in, you ran out to Bill Hewitt's, got on an ambulance and assisted, or any way you did. You attended funerals. It was always, mostly always a pall bearer for some family--poor family--that we--we started to give blood here. And--but they were so interested in the fire company them years. And then the racing team was a great thing in this fire company. 1931, I went in on the racing team. And the Pierce Arrow, there was quite a high step on it. And there was two-wheel brakes on it--just rear brakes.

Q: Didn't stop that quickly.

TM: And we had longer runs. Mac McCarthy was our driver that year, and he was a hell of a good driver--Mac was.

Q: That would be Billy McCarthy's grandfather?

TM: Grandfather, yeah. And he was a good driver. So ... [I forget] ... going back to a tournament--I think it was Glen Cove--I came down, got off so fast, and Mac says, "no brakes." And I got--we got off the truck, and I pulled the two heels off my shoes.

Q: Wow.

TM: We had hot feet!

Q: Yeah.

TM: And we had--the tournaments--we had more water fights and different things as--it was a lot of competition between the Rowdies--we was the Rangers--the Rowdies of Atlantic's, and the Runts was Flower Hill. And we had competition amongst ourselves. And it was all good sportsmanship. We were--but when we came on the course, all the three companies was all together, all rooting for each other. I mean, that's the way it was. Wallace Lans drove for the Atlantics, and Allie Reynolds, and a few of them fellows up there drove for the Runts, and they're--but it was a very interesting company all the way through.

Q: Were you expected to race when you got in, or did you race because you ...

TM: No, you volunteered for it.

Q: And most everybody did?

TM: And mostly every--all the young fellows went out to see if they could make the team. There was a waitin' list.

Q: Oh, yeah?

TM: Yes. And there was a waitin' list for everything--for an office, like on the engineers, you'd have to wait your turn and you had to prove yourself before you even got it. And there was a lot of things in this company, do's and don't's. They called it the unwritten law. You might hear that sometime in the company. There was an unwritten law. It didn't have to be on the books; it was never on the books.

Q: People knew that they were supposed to ...

TM: They knew--otherwise, they knew right from wrong. The unwritten law. And, so, that was a hard company. Otherwise, we'd go up in the back room upstairs--this is--I'm getting ahead of my story. But, back in the old wooden building, it was torn down, all but one wall.

Q: And this is when you got in?

TM: Yes. I mean, that's the year--I mean, the following year, 1931, the building was torn down. And there was two men in charge of it. They was building inspectors from our company. Walter Crooker and Wag Larkins.

Q: And they worked for the town or something?

TM: They worked for us. For the company.

Q: Okay.

TM: They supervised the job of construction. The construction company was Pollock & Wysong. And they supervised everything that went in this firehouse. From how many-- the old firehouse had a coal furnace in it. This back room where we're sittin' right now ...

Q: It had a coal furnace; who would stoke the fire?

TM: Cleve Poole was the janitor at the time.

Q: And he would be responsible for ...

TM: He was responsible to keep the fire going downstairs. It went into that old chimney. The

chimney is still there.

Q: This one--the one that's behind us.

TM: One--yeah, down there. And, because, see, the elevation of the cellar up here ...

Q: Yeah, there's like a vacant wall around it.

TM: And then, the new building was built, and that was lowered down to the America LaFrance truck bay. So, that building--we moved when this building was being built, we moved down to Marshal's, across from police headquarters. There was a garage there.

Q: Now, this is down where the P.A.L. is today.

TM: Right across from P.A.L., Marshal's had a building. We put our trucks in that building, and we had our meetings there while this building was built. There was quite a steep ramp going up in there. You have to go up this concrete ramp about six foot high to back the trucks in there, and then you came onto the floor, which was Marshal's garage for a long period of time and then it became an antique shop. It's a--I believe it's an antique shop today. So, we was down there while this new building was being built. One thing that was left intact was one wall and the pipe going up for the fire alarm was left intact, because that was the only means of fire signals in this town was this horn system. Flower

Hill had a siren; Atlantic's had a bell. So, that one wall--that pipe wasn't moved on the whole construction operation.

Q: Was that the horn? That was the air horn?

TM: The air horn; correct.

Q: Was that a new thing, or had that been in the company a while?

TM: That had been in the company maybe--oh, it came in in the '20s.

Q: '20s?

TM: Yeah. But I just forget the exact date.

Q: And before then, they used to just ring the bell?

TM: Yeah. Yeah. Before--I mean, as long as I can remember, the horn. I think it was given by citizens of Port Washington to the Port Washington Fire Department. Just, I mean, some old stories I heard about it. The old back room that we used to sit in here was a very interesting room. There wasn't much furniture in it. But there was a gas heater that you lit with a match.

Q: Would it be in the middle of the room?

TM: Put it in the middle of the room. There was a tube coming out of the floor--a tube coming out from the gas jet. You turned it on and lit the gas heater, but you ... [I'd run and] ... open a window. You know, you would die in here. But that was the means of heat in the building. A coal furnace downstairs in the old building. Wooden floors. And it was a nice old building. Here it is right here. That's the building.

Q: That's what it looked like when you ...

TM: That's what it looked like when I got in. No ...

Q: Except for the extension to the right of the building?

TM: Yeah, right here. The extension was on right here. This was a little before my time.

Q: And there's the air horn up at the top.

TM: That's right. That's the air horn up there. This is the--this is the door. And the two trucks set in there on that floor and one sat down there, and this was the door going up to the meeting room--the judge's chambers--in that picture.

Q: And these look like barn doors. The two of them would open out.

TM: Yeah, two doors--the two would open out.

Q: Would you have to put the trucks in on an angle?

TM: Yes. You'd back one over to one side, and back one over on the other side. The Laraby stayed in there and the Pierce Arrow stayed in there.

Q: Now, which one of those two trucks--did both of them have a pump on 'em, or did they ...

TM: No. No, the Laraby didn't have a pump on it. That was just a hose truck. This was the Garford.

Q: Okay.

TM: This was--this truck went to Plandome.

Q: Sold it after we were done with it.

TM: After we got the American LaFrance, this truck went to Plandome.

Q: And that had a pump on it?

TM: That had a pump. That had a five hundred gallon pump.

Q: And when you went to a fire, are these the two trucks that were in when you came in?

TM: No. The American LaFrance was there.

Q: Okay. And the Garford?

TM: The Laraby--this was a Pierce Arrow, but this one wasn't in. We got another Cadillac that was up in the annex on Hicksville on the Henderson property.

Q: Whereabouts would that be?

TM: That would be four houses from the corner on the left-hand side, going in to Avenue B.

Q: Avenue B. From Middleneck Road?

TM: Yeah. Across--part-way across the way from where Johnny Edmundson lives today.

Q: Uh huh.

TM: There was a big house in there, and there was two firemen in there. Perry Henderson was our Engineer when I came in. And Ar--his brother Artie was in the company--Artie Henderson. And Perry was in this company quite a long while. And so they thought the needs of a--of course, they had a lot of firemen up in the Hicksville area--what they call the Hicksville area.

Q: Which is the Terrace.

TM: No. That's Avenue A, Avenue B ...

TM: Avenue A and Avenue B and Henderson Avenue. That was Hicksville. There was a number of men up there. There were the Seifts--Elmer Seifts, Nelson Seifts, Wes Seifts. I mean who got me an application for the company. There was Red Hooper. There was a Adams, there was the two Olson boys. There was Johnny Herbert who came later in the day. And that's about the--about the--Mount Carey lived down the hill. But they all would ride on that truck--the old Cadillac. And sometimes the springs was really down on it, and they carried about ten lengths of hose on it and a couple of fire extinguishers, then the nozzle and raincoats. And it always got there.

Q: Did they ever have any trouble--did they ever have any times when, say, a truck wouldn't

get out of the firehouse, that they wouldn't have enough manpower to get the truck out?

TM: They would push it out the door. It rolled to the fire if they pushed it out the door. Very seldom. We had a lot of manpower.

Q: No problem getting it out.

TM: No problem. No problem with manpower. It was always ...

Q: Night or day?

TM: ... no. The bosses was always good. They'd give 'em time off to go to a fire, and that was it. I mean, I worked for bosses in Sands Point. Go on! Heard the fire horn go, go ahead and go.

Q: No problem.

TM: No problem.

Q: Yeah.

TM: And it was a--I don't know; you can't explain it.

Q: Was it more like a community feeling? Everybody had a responsibility?

TM: More than a community--more than a community feeling. Like you was all brothers. I mean, one person getting into trouble, you were still glad to help him. If a car broke down, or something like that, you went and helped him out, get his car home. There's still a bit of that feeling today, now. But, I mean ...

Q: But it was more like a fam--a close family.

TM: Yeah, it was a close-knitted family--a very close-knitted family. And it was a wonderful experience to be in the fire company.

Q: Like I said before, I guess the Fire Department was the only--the only thing, I mean, other than your own family at home. Like, today, you may want to go camping or you may want to go to a ball game or something. Back then, the Fire Department was camping; it was the ball game. It was everything.

TM: It was the center point of things. How you do things on pulse of the moment. I see you sitting up here maybe after a tournament practice or--I mean, a racing team practice. And we'd be sitting around talking, and someone'd get the bright idea, let's go to Flushing and get an ice cream soda. So, we would ride to Flushing to get an ice cream soda.

Q: But everybody went together.

TM: And everyone went in a couple of cars--hopped in a couple of cars. Or "Let's go get ..."--there wasn't at this time, in our fire company, there was no liquor ever allowed in this firehouse. And to this day, I've never seen any liquor in there. ... [Was very interest] ... in this company, I got on the Engineer's staff. I was around about thirty-four, thirty-five I started on the Engineer's staff. I worked under Irv Foster. He became Chief Engineer, because Perry Henderson was Engineer, Georgie Wood was Engineer, and Al Gross was an Engineer. But, there was something lacking--leadership. So, Irv came in and took over--he was a Foreman when I came in the company. And after he was--was he--no, he was Chief ...

Q: Chief Engineer or Chief of the Department?

TM: No, he was Chief of the Department. But it was later in the day when Irv became--and I worked up under Irv as his 1st Assistant Engineer. And he was a--he was a perfectionist. Irv wanted them motors clean and painted that you could rub a glove on 'em. He didn't want to see any oil on the floor, unless it came from the chains of the truck. The American LaFrance was a chain-driven truck.

Q: No drive shaft. Is that what you mean?

TM: The drive shaft came back so far into sprockets. And then the chains was about six-foot chains going to the rear wheels. And that pulled the truck. So, other words, the truck was chain driven. Now, every--every other year or so, we would have to take them chains off and grease them. And the method of doin' it was going up to Gross's butcher shop and getting tallow from leg of lamb.

Q: Tallow?

TM: Yes, lamb fat. And then, we'd come up here--back here to the kitchen, and we'd get a big pot, and we rendered that down into a grease and then put it in pails and go out and wash the chains with gasoline and clean them off with kerosene, and then we would dip them chains into this tallow and hang 'em up and let them drip off. And then we'd put them back on the truck. Now, that would keep--well, just like a bicycle, you know how a bicycle chain is?

Q: Yeah.

TM: All the little rollers? Well, it would keep them lubricated for a year.

Q: One application would serve for a whole year?

TM: One application. A year to a year and a half. And kept out chains in good shape. You'd get a snow storm, you was down here to put the chains on ...

Q: Would you stand by if there was a snow storm? Like if it got too deep ...

TM: Well, if it was too deep, we would stand by. Most of the time we didn't go home until one or two o'clock in the morning, or three o'clock in the morning. We used to go up to the Polish bakery up there. That was up on Avenue A--Michelek and his father had a bakery up there. And you'd go up there at one o'clock in the morning. The rolls would be just coming out. So, I would bring a couple of dozen rolls and we'd come back to the firehouse and we'd have a pound of butter and a pound of coffee, and we'd have coffee and rolls. So, by the time we got done with that, washing up the dishes and cleaning up the things, we would then could all go home.

Q: You know what's interesting, just listening to what you talk about. There's a--there's a picture that people get up of the firemen as being drunken bums. And what you're telling me is when you were in the company, you drank coffee and ate rolls ...

TM: Yeah.

Q: ... and there was no liquor. I mean ...

TM: Well, it was ...

Q: ... outside, maybe, but not in the firehouse.

TM: ... outside. Not in the firehouse. Not in the firehouse. Now, if we had played ball, we'd go up there and play ball--softball up at the school and also hardball many a times. And we'd also--used to play against the Navy that used to come in here. The US Memphis, we played. Our company played against them.

Q: Where did they come--to Town Dock?

TM: No. They had to anchor out ...

Q: In the Sound?

TM: Out in the Sound. When the Memphis come in, there was all the sailors that used to come in, and then all of us got together with a ball game. And that ended up at the school--the fleet. There'd be about a couple of destroyers and there was a big, heavy cruiser was in here one time. That was before the War.

Q: World War I?

TM: Before World War II.

Q: II. Sorry (laughs).

TM: And, but it was so interesting. We used to play donkey baseball.

Q: Oh, on the backs of donkeys.

TM: Yes, yes. We was all young guys. We would also have field days. Or run the mile, do different things like that. Put on equipment and ...

Q: Well, who would get all that stuff together? Who would sponsor it?

TM: The Department would get that together.

Q: Somebody would just say what ...

TM: Yeah, and then we would have a--we'd have a couple of kegs of beer. But in my time the beer was Needle beer.

Q: Needle beer?

TM: Yes.

Q: Which means what?

TM: Other words, what they did--it was Prohibition. And they had Near beer, see. And they would stick a needle in ether and ...

Q: To make it a little more potent?

TM: ... to make it more potent. They called that--then there was also apple jack was quite a drink.

Q: And that was just like a--it was from a still or something?

TM: It came from stills, but what they used to do, they used to take cider--hard cider--up in the cold country, they could do this. And they rolled a barrel of hard cider out in the cold and it would freeze. And then, they would take a red-hot poker and put it through the bung, and then they would pour out the contents--it was all alcohol in the center.

Q: Oh. And that's what apple jack was.

TM: That was what apple jack is, and that was probably about a hundred and twenty proof or

so. We had one guy in this company--company. His name was Mickey Davis. He came in, oh, late '30s. And he was a sand hog. He lived up in the park. He wasn't a bad guy. But he introduced tunnel rum to some of the guys when we used to have our sports event.

Q: Tunnel rum.

TM: Tunnel rum.

Q: Now what's--what is tunnel rum?

TM: I don't know what it was made from ...

Q: (Laughs).

TM: ... but it would go down and would come back up again (laughs). But, getting back to the baseball games that we used to have. We used to have clam bakes. And the clam bakes consisted of a round ring, and then would build a fire on top of it, and then they'd sweep the ashes off of all the clams. And then they would have Worcestershire sauce and tomato catchup and horseradish. And them clams--after they--you got--put a plate full of them on, and you would break the clams open, which it was too damn hot to hold, and then you'd take the clam out, dip it, and eat it. So, we used to go up, back in the park up there in the sand--it's the sand banks now--but there was a big red house up there. No

one lived in it. And we got away from everybody, and we went up there and had a few--a barrel of beer after a ball game or--and the clams and maybe some sweet corn, and--or maybe it'd cost you a quarter each or so to chip in. There wasn't money around here then.

Q: Would that--when you say up in the park. Would that be off of the Boulevard up ...

TM: Yes.

Q: ... Park Avenue, somewhere up there?

TM: Up there.

Q: Was that farm land then, or was it a park?

TM: Well, it was a--a lot of it was farm land up there. Walters had a farm up there; Jankowski had a farm up there. In fact, the old place we went on up there was the Thayer house--the Thayer estate at one time.

Q: Was that up by Sands Point?

TM: No, not too--that was a different Thayer. That was a different Thayer. But, we just went up in that big vacant lot, and we had a party and that was our entertainment. But never

around the firehouse with any liquor or anything like that.

Q: What was the reason for that? Why wouldn't they allow liquor?

TM: Well, liquor wasn't allowed in the country.

Q: Oh, because of Prohibition.

TM: In 1932, after President Roosevelt got in, there was a repeal of the 18th Amendment. And then we got--we didn't have any liquor in there then. We didn't have any--after a meeting, we didn't have anything to eat. Finally, we had coffee and donuts. Things like that. So, so many things that--going on. There was another thing that we enjoyed was the Bug House Hose Company. That's--we was asked to join a Bug House Hose Company. And I'll never forget. We went over to a firehouse. It was Jake [John Mahoney Sr.), Bunny Leitz, Mount Carey, "McCarty"--Bill McCarthy--and Kelly [Arnold Kelly] and myself. Went over and become Bugs. So, the candidates was put down in the cellar by a big hot water--hot air furnace. Their firehouse was a hot air furnace, and there was one register in the floor. So, we was put down in this cellar, waiting for our turn to go up to be initiated. So, we didn't know what the hell would happen. But someone got the bright idea to urinate in the fire. And, honest to God, you talk about a skunk! Hitting a skunk on a road. Sitting in that room and smelling that. And then we went up. That was part of our initiation. We didn't know it.

Q: (Laughs).

TM: We went up and they put us through our initiation where they blindfolded you and you went through the whole rigmarole. And, barefooted, we stepped on coal; we stepped on Lord knows what. Well, we finally got through it and we did it all as good sports and we belonged to the Bug House. We used to go around to different meetings. They have a meeting once a month, or every two months, and we used to go to the Bug House meetings. We enjoyed that. And we brought more membership in from our company. And one night, a fellow by the name of Henry Wackwitz, he was in this company. He was walking along the street, getting some drugs. "Say, Henry ..." Ray Driscoll, Bunny Leitz, and myself, "Come on, get in." And he said, "I have to go right home." "Oh, don't worry about it." So, we took Henry over and he joined the Bugs that night. And he took it all in good spirits. He got home about twelve o'clock; his wife was still waitin' for the medicine. But that's the way the guys just did things. They were ... [??] ... they're playing jokes on you. You'd come back from racing, and you were liable to have a pail of water dumped down on your head from upstairs, up at the windows.

Q: And it was expected.

TM: Yes, it was expected. I mean, they made sure that if the floor or anything like that was wet that it would be cleaned. But, I mean, the window was open and they was up there

waiting for you. And, as soon as you came there, you always generally better look before you moved around there ... [after the ramp] ... And then you'd get to washing trucks, and you'd get in a fight with the hose, and things like that. So, anyway, I went up on the Engineer's staff. Then I became 2nd Assistant Foreman. Then, I became--I was 2nd Assistant Foreman under Dooley [Bill Dooley].

Q: What year was that? Do you remember?

TM: Nineteen--nineteen ... [END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A; BEGIN SIDE B] ...

Q: So, '40 and '41, you were ...

TM: '40--I think it was '40, I would become 2nd Assistant Engineer--I mean, 2nd Assistant Foreman. And then Dooley was the 1st Assistant, and Eddie Landwehr was the Foreman. And then I went up--Dooley was Foreman and I went up to 1st Assistant Foreman. And in 1942, I had to resign as Foreman in this company--1st Assistant Foreman--because I went on the Police Department of Sands Point. So, that was one of the hard things I hated to do. But I still kept my membership up and attended as many fires as I could, but my job left me out in the cold.

Q: Shift work and all that.

TM: It's shift work and things like that. But so, when I retired, I came back, and I've enjoyed a little bit of it ... [Now that's about all of my life years that I can think of, or I could tell you some of the] ...

Q: Did everybody want to be an officer? Just about everybody who was in the company? I mean ...

TM: No. No, at times, no. At times, yes. That was a--to get up in this company, I mean, there was always some opposition. But then when you got up there, you did a good job, I think Irv Foster was a darn good foreman. Some of the foremen I served under was Irv Foster, Arnold Foster.

Q: Brothers?

TM: Yes. Mount Carey and Bill McCarthy, Bert Carpenter. Nitty Carpenter. And so right on down the line.

Q: When somebody didn't pull their weight, how was that handled? Did the officers take care of that, or did the members usually ...

TM: Officers and members would do it.

Q: Oh, in subtle ways, they would ...

TM: That's right.

Q: ... needle the guy?

TM: Other words, it was a volunteer. You volunteered to do the job. And you was expected to do your job and do it right. IF you didn't, someone else would take your job. And then you would probably be brought up on charges for neglect of duty, which is no more than right. Very few got brought up on charges, some of them got brought up for conduct unbecoming a member, different little incidents that they brought them up.

Q: Anything you can remember, in particular, where something like that might have happened?

TM: Well, little things like a fella' came in here one time--I'm not going to mention any names.

Q: Not who.

TM: And he thought he was in the bathroom. He pissed on the wheel of the truck.

Q: And he knew he was doing that or ...

TM: He didn't realize he was doing it. He was--he was drinking. But he did it. And a couple of the officers sat in here and watched him. So, they brought him up on charges for that little incident. That was because he had no business being in here in a drunken condition. That's the way they looked at it--the punishment. And it wasn't severe. But the gentleman, he still remained a member.

Q: What type of punishment would they mete out? Would they just like suspend the guy or ...

TM: They would just suspend the guy for a week or a couple of days. And then the membership would get to him and some of his best--you know, other words, when you came in this company--I came in with Arnold Kelly. So, more or less, Arnold Kelly and I always seemed to be friends, you know. I imagine when you came in, Peter, you had someone come in with you, and you always--you always had something in conversation, because you didn't know your way around, you know.

Q: Right, right.

TM: Until you got your feet wet, you know. That's the way it was in the fire company. And then, once you got to know everybody, I mean, you take Walt Crooker. He was our first

fifty-year man to ever receive any gift. They had a big party here down in the truck room for him. Wag Larkins was next.

Q: And that's when that star--that tradition started?

TM: That's when that tradition started. And then ...

Q: Was that in the '40s?

TM: That was in the '40s, yes. Yes.

Q: I've seen pictures of it.

TM: Yeah, but he was the first one. I believe they give him a nice big rocking chair to--as a gift.

Q: (Laughs) appropriate gift.

TM: And the thing was all cold buffet and cold cuts and--and nice big cake. And there was a life history of him in the company--of his doings. He was a--you know, they only had two Trustees them days. It was Walt Crooker and Gross at the time.

Q: When did they go to--they have five now.

TM: After the '40s.

Q: Do you remember why they decided to do that?

TM: Well, they figured it was too much responsibility, and you couldn't get the Trustees at all times. I mean, I don't think the Trustee--or, I mean, they was in charge of the money. I can remember one night I conducted a meeting. Dooley [Bill Dooley] wasn't here, and I conducted the meeting.

Q: This is ...

TM: Bill Dooley.

Q: That's Digger Dooley's father. He was foreman at the time. He was in the undertaker business.

Q: Did they also call him Digger?

TM: No, no. Well, they might've called him. But he was in this firehouse. Oh, Dooley was quite a character. He was in this fire company quite a while. And he had an office and a

business in Flushing. But he used--to keep his status in the firehouse, he had an office.

He kept his clothes here.

Q: Oh, so he lived in Flushing ...

TM: He, for a while--but to keep his status up, he had his clothes here. So, well, he wasn't breaking the law, you see.

Q: Right, right.

TM: See. So, anyway, I'll never forget that meeting. John Lewis was Secretary and Joe Hoffer was the Treasurer. And I sat up there and conducted the meeting. And John come up and said to me, "Have you started to sign the vouchers yet?" I said, "What is the vouchers, John?" He said, "Every bill that's ordered paid, you have to sign a voucher for and order that bill paid." So, that was one of the things the Trustees took over. The Foreman had to do that. So, I was a way behind, and then I started to sign vouchers, and I started to read what they were. There was a whole lot of paid, but I started to sign the vouchers. So my signature should be on some of them old vouchers, and that's the way they conducted business. And they would conduct the business the same--a meeting is the same as they do today. A person would get up and speak his mind. And there was a lot of good criticism. And Irv Foster was one for good criticism. He ...

Q: Giving it or taking it?

TM: Well, giving it. He would give it. He would sit back and listen, then all of a sudden, I mean, a lot of the guys didn't like Irv. He was an ex-Marine. And he came out, and he joined the fire company, and then he-that Marine stuff wore off on him, and the company, too.

Q: He kept ...

TM: Yeah. And it was hard times around this fire company in the ration years.

Q: How'd you get your money back then?

TM: What?

Q: In the--during the Depression?

TM: How did we get our money?

Q: Was it through the town taxes, or did you ...

TM: Yes.

Q: ... donations?

TM: Otherwise, what started the town taxes is the Maloney Law. That became law. That's when the town got taxes.

Q: That just permitted the volunteer fire department to ...

TM: Yes, to contract with the County. That's what I was told by some of the older time--the fellows working there, it was the Maloney Law. I always heard the Maloney Law. And that--I don't know what year it went in. But that was when we--before that, I understand, they had to run raffles and different things, and, in fact, there was a funny thing. I was down at Midway Service Station, which is out of business now. And ...

Q: Where would that be located?

TM: That's on Manorhaven Boulevard.

Q: Oh, Texaco.

TM: Texaco. Artie Cocks--He was a member in this company.

Q: Right, right.

TM: Young Artie. And his father was a member. He was with Herbie Carpenter and Jimmie Bedell, and that racing team--George [Mahoney] and all that crowd, and when I was Captain of the racing team. That year.

Q: What year was that?

TM: That was '40, '41, '42. '38, '39. That's when Morrison and all that young crowd got in, and I was--I was a young officer then. Yeah. And that was in '39. We went to the World Fair had a tournament.

Q: In Flushing?

TM: In Flushing, yeah. We represent Port Washington, because our team was the best in the town. And the way the application read, there was only one team for the town. So, we didn't want to break up the team, so we got permission from Flower Hill and Atlantic's. We had a meeting. And we came to an agreement, that we were--due to the fact we had more trophies and did better that year. And, we went down there. We did pretty well. In fact, our #2 LaFrance was--that's was its first parade it ever went to, there in 1939 at the World Fair.

Q: That would be what? Number one? The truck?

TM: Huh.

Q: Is that the one you called Number One or Number Two?

TM: Well, Number One was the big La France. Number Two was the 500-gallon pumper.

Q: So, which one would that be that you brought down there? Number Two?

TM: Number Two. That was the--that was the last truck--La France--we bought, you know, before we went into the other ones.

Q: Uh huh. And you were saying, before we got ...

TM: That replaced the Laraby.

Q: And they both had pumps on 'em.

TM: Yeah, they both had pumps on them. That's why we had two pumpers in this company. That was the argument on the floor to get the second pumper, because we felt we'd relay water. In them days, there were very few hydrants. An awful lot of grass fires.

Q: Where would you pump from?

TM: We would pump from the cisterns. You know what a cistern is?

Q: A well? Like a well?

TM: A cistern is like a cesspool. It had a concrete floor in it. And all the water that ran off the roof ...

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

TM: ... down the leaders, would go into the cesspool. And you would probably have a thousand to two thousand gallons of water in a cesspool.

Q: But it was clean water. It wasn't just ...

TM: It was rain water.

Q: Yeah, rain water.

TM: If you went down to Bermuda today, you would get the same damn thing, you know, or

where they don't have water. Just, now there were cisterns all over the place. They also had wells for drinking, you see. But, to wash clothes with and wash dishes, or then anything that you would boil, you would use cistern water. We also might sometimes use cesspools.

Q: You would use cesspool water.

TM: We'd use the cesspool in different times. All you have to do is watch that you don't get toilet paper caught.

Q: You had to wash out all the pumps and everything afterwards?

TM: Oh, yes. You would wash 'em out when you'd get to a hydrant. Yeah. But, where there was no water--I mean there were no hydrants, no water to knock down the fire. Back in the '30s, there was an awful lot of false alarms.

Q: What--was there somebody calling in false alarms or what?

TM: What they would do at that time, there was a lot of bootlegging going on. And the boot--bootleggers would land with their boats at docks at Sands Point. And the trucks would meet them.

Q: Not the fire trucks (laughs).

TM: Not the fire trucks. No, not the fire trucks. The trucks would be there to meet them. So, they would blow the alarm, and the trucks would take--the bootlegger trucks would take an opposite route out of town.

Q: They'd try to pull everybody the other way?

TM: That's right. Because, years ago, they used to go--now these are the stories, and they are true stories--and Mac McCarthy and Georgie Wood, Jim Hegeman, the Dickinson brothers--they could all tell you the same thing. Bill Hewitt, if they was alive today, they could tell you the stories.

Q: Did that happen quite a lot?

TM: That happened about a couple of times, about every two months (laughs).

Q: Didn't they get wise to it?

TM: Yeah, they got wise to it. They knew what was going on. But, I mean, they knew. Finally, they got wise to it what was going on. The cops was all bought off. I mean, not bought off, but they went towards the fire. I mean, they may only have one patrol car

out, so they went towards the fire where the alarm is. And so, they went around maybe Harbor Road up, back up, if it was up at North Hempstead Country Club, they would put it up at North Hempstead Country Club, or put it way down in Sands Point, the furthest point down there.

Q: And then they'd go the other way.

TM: Yeah.

Q: But, back then, are you saying--how would you communicate with each other when there was a fire? There were no radios, right?

TM: No, no radios.

Q: You just got--everybody got to the fire, and that was--and then they decided ...

TM: In fact, the Police Department--I think it was in 1938--they had one-way radio come in the police cars. That was the County. And then Port Washington got it. 1941, we had our first radio in our police headquarters. And it was an Erco, was the name of it. Ed Ruth made it--a fellow from Hempstead. He had a big radio business. Then, after that, Motorola and all of it became--and to be an operator, you had to have a license. You had to pass a test. And that was put up in the headquarters--police headquarters. And you

also had to have a--I think I have--still have my--one of my permits to ride in the cars.

But they've done away with all that.

Q: When you--when you responded to a fire, and, say, it was a big fire ...

TM: Yeah.

Q: ... the first truck would come in and, all right, they'd do what they had to do. What about the second, third, and fourth trucks? How would they know where to go, what to do? They'd just roll up to the scene and the Chief would tell 'em, or somebody would tell them what to do?

TM: Other words--other words, if it was a long lay--let's take--let's take the Foreman fire.

Q: Sands Point.

TM: Sands Point. I believe that was around 1938. There was one small hydrant on that thing on a two-inch line.

Q: Where is the Foreman, you know ...

TM: Other words, that is on Hillsdale Lane. It took that whole property. There was a big

house across there. And that went on fire one day. Now, it's about a half a mile from the road into there--two driveways going in. So, there was no hydrant at that--well, there was one hydrant out in the road at Cow Neck Road. But we laid from there all the way in. We had to put one pumper left in the road to pump.

Q: So, maybe it took two or three trucks to lay the line in?

TM: So, it was probably two lines where we'd have to get enough hose off the two trucks to lay a line in. And then, we would get a--we also, if it was a long lay, we'd have a rel--what you call a relay--put two trucks. The first truck would pump so much, and then you figure your friction loss and you would keep it at a certain pressure, so you would relay water it. That was--I mean, a lot of hose would have to be laid for a large fire. We also turned, that day, we took the Number Two truck. I took that down to a pond at the Van Wart place. Threw the suctions in, dropped the hose all the down--oh, I'd say about a thousand feet of hose--in the pond, and I pumped a stream up there. That little truck really pumped a stream of water. And we pumped that pond down, I would say that pond is about three hundred feet around, and we pumped that down to about a foot and a half all the way around the edges.

Q: Wow.

TM: But that was a method of ...

Q: How would you get your orders to do that, though. Or how would the Chief relay to you the message that he wanted you to go to Van Wart's pond and pump?

TM: You would make the suggestion: "There's a pond down there, Chief. Do you want me to go down there and pick up a ..."

Q: So, all the trucks would go into where the fire was ...

TM: No, they wouldn't congregate at the fire. There would be space such as you could get by. And the ladder trucks was always priority to get in, to take down--I mean, to ... [let a lake] ... or whatever had to be done. I mean, otherwise, we didn't know--have much training outside of what you learned at fires--how to operate--how to operate your pumps.

Q: So it would be on-the-job training.

TM: On-the-job training. And then, the County--I think it was 1938--came in with a trainer. Name was Bedell. He was a New York City battalion Chief. And he was one of the first to start to give us ladders training and ropes and different things like that, which a lot of us knew. I mean, we learned a lot by errors.

Q: From your mistakes. You made a mistake, and the next time you knew ...

TM: Well, you didn't make a--you didn't want to make a mistake. There was one house up in Harbor Acres. It was Benny Morgan, Walter Nelson was in this company. Walter Nelson was in this company. And Benny Morgan. There was a gas explosion in the cellar. And the house lifted right up off the foundation. And, to this day, Benny Morgan's raincoat is in between the foundation and the cellar. So we had to cut the raincoat off. We had fatalities.

Q: From the company?

TM: No, no.

Q: From citizens?

TM: Citizens. The Berg fire was fatalities.

Q: That was the Berg Oil Company. Yes. That was on Manhasset Isle, right?

TM: That was Manhasset Isle, yep. There was three lost their lives there.

Q: It seems you always heard of--any big fires I've heard of were up in Sands Point, most of 'em ...

TM: Yes.

Q: ... in the big estates.

TM: There was a lot of grass fires down in Sands Point. There was a lot of grass--open land. And then it started to develop after--I mean, there was mostly all big estates there. And then, they started to develop, and they cut roads through it. And other words, there was nothing there. So, then, they put water lines in, and they got their own water district down there. But the big houses was in Sands Point. There was only small houses here. I mean, there's quite a--most of your houses, I mean, was built--the Park Section was built around 1925. I mean, as you know--you work for the sewer company--if you look at the sewer manholes, you can tell what section of town is the oldest and how it developed.

Q: Right.

TM: I mean, the Heights--what we call the Heights up here on Bayview Avenue and Murray Avenue. That was The Heights. But it was a very interesting town.

Q: Everybody knew everybody else.

TM: And, we used to go down and get clams ...

Q: Dig 'em? Dig 'em yourself?

TM: Now--yeah, we dug 'em with big poles. Go out on the ice with an ice saw, cut them. Got a hole in the ice.

Q: ... [??] ...

TM: Yeah, Irv Foster, Mac McCarthy, and Kelly, Bunny Leitz, Ray Driscoll. All cut a hole in the ice. And Herb Carpenter had that big hook with about a twenty-foot pole on it. Twenty foot water. And when he'd bring it up, he'd bring up a half a bushel of clams. And wash out there--wash them off, put 'em in a barrel, and bring a couple of baskets up to the firehouse. And then there was clam fritters. There was clam broth. There was chowder made.

Q: All at the firehouse?

TM: All at the firehouse. Upstairs. ... [?] ... would say, "Let's have clams tonight." This is while we're sitting around playing cards, you know. It was a group of us hanging around here. And, I mean, all of the fellows maybe that wasn't too old used to come, and we'd all have a feed of clams, and that was our entertainment. But it didn't cost the company one penny, but we did it on our own. And everything was washed, cleaned, put away;

garbage put out. You know, that's one thing was taught to us in the fire company was tidiness. If you see something laying down, pick it up or stand it up. Never leave it laying here. And I still have that trait, you know.

Q: If you didn't do it ...

TM: Huh? You would be told to do it. I mean, that was it. "I told you to do it. Now, do it." That was the answer.

Q: No if's, and's, or but's.

TM: No. That was it. But a nice way. In a nice way.

Q: Where you didn't mind doing it.

TM: You didn't mind. You did it with a smile. Yeah.

Q: Did you have any, like in the '30s, any annual dinners? Did you have annual dinners then?

TM: Yes, we did. My first annual dinner, they had--used to have turkey dinners here. The women put on a turkey dinner. The Auxiliary. That's Georgie Wood's mother and your--

probably your sister, Mable.

Q: My aunt.

TM: Your aunt.

Q: Aunt Mable. My father's sister.

TM: Oh, that's right. That's right. Yeah. And she was just about in the fire company a little before me. I mean, about the same time. But she was--she was going with Stanley Wood at the time. And, in fact, she was married to Stanley Wood. And, so they have a--used to have a dinner here. But I never had a dinner in this building. My first dinner was up in the Plaza Building. That's in Main Street. They had a--upstairs, they had a club room up there. And we had a turkey dinner. And it was a very enjoyable dinner.

Q: That was an annual affair?

TM: That was an--that became an annual affair. And then, we went down and we, after that, we probably had it up there a couple of years, and then we down the Masonic Hall, which is on Columbia Place.

Q: Oh, where the apartment building is.

TM: Where the apartment building is. And we was in there two or three years. Chief Weber was invited, and it's something similar to what it is today. I mean, like the Chief of Police and maybe Judge Jones or Judge Lecluse or Judge Jones and some fire commissioners, like the County President and different things like that, was invited. And I think we had it down in the Knickerbocker Yacht Club a couple of times. And then, I believe we went over to Coffee's Corner.

Q: Where is that?

TM: That's over the ... [??] ... over in Roslyn where Manero's is today. It was over there one time.

Q: Coffee's Corner?

TM: Yeah.

Q: Did somebody named Coffee used to own that or ...

TM: I don't know; it must be. But it was always known as Coffee's Corner over there. A lot of these old names--same as we've got a name down at Sands Point--Mahoney's Cabaret.

Q: Yeah, I've heard about that. What was that?

TM: That was my grandfather farmed in Sands Point Club. And right across the way was Barker's Point Road, today. And up about Dogwood Lane, where it is today, was a little lover's lane in there. Now, due to the fact my uncles--they all lived there--they called that Mahoney's Cabaret.

Q: (Laughs). That's where you take all your girlfriends.

TM: That's why it's a lover's lane. Lover's lane.

Q: That must have been all woods then, right? No houses surrounding.

TM: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, that was part of Port Washington proper at that time. That wasn't Sands Point.

Q: Oh, it wasn't?

TM: No. Sands Point had a funny boundary line. It started up at Astor Lane and went all the way down on the right side of Middleneck Road to Cow Neck Road.

Q: Uh huh. And everything on the left side wasn't Sands Point?

TM: No, it wasn't. And then, it went across the golf lots. There was a golf course there. Cow Neck Road. Went across to Sands Point Road where Rose's house is. There's a big house there. ... [??] ... lived in it. And then it went up a ways to where Tibbits Lane is today. And it went across to Messenger Lane. And then it went down to Gendoff's Lane. And it took in Barker's Point and that whole section--Hicks Lane. And when Sands Point was incorporated, it was three villages.

Q: Must've followed the big estates.

TM: It followed the big estates, yes. There was the incorporated Village of Barker's Point, the incorporated Village of Sands Point, and the incorporated Village of Motts Point.

Q: Really.

TM: In 1912, they became Sands Point.

Q: Wow. I never knew that.

TM: Now you know.

Q: Yeah.

TM: Because that's the year I was born.

Q: Wow. I've never heard that. I never heard that before. That's interesting. That's interesting. When you were racing, where did you used to practice?

TM: We raced--we practiced on Cambridge Avenue.

Q: In Manorhaven.

TM: In Manorhaven, on a gravel road.

Q: That was sand pits then?

TM: Yeah. And that was a development at one time. But it wasn't--the roads wasn't improved. We raced there for a while. Our pumpers, the hose contest. And we looked for a cable going across the road that we used our ladders on. Tied a rag up. But we would never run to the top of the ladder, because there was too much bounce when you hit the cable. And we'd just go about two rungs from the top, which we could tell how a guy's stride was, you know. It's how the flow. But you always got that bounce back, and that could throw a guy off stride runnin' on them ladders. And we, down here in The Heights--oh, what's the name of the road down there. A little short road. We put a little

arch up down there, we was told to take it down.

Q: On Pine Street?

TM: No.

Q: Bayview Colony?

TM: No. It was Terrace Drive.

Q: Oh, really?

TM: Down those little streets going ...

Q: Terrace Court.

TM: Terrace Court, I think it was. And we was told to take it down, which we did. We would--we used our ladders there. We raced up in the Park, and we raced over here on Webster Avenue. We raced on Middleneck Road. We raced on Shore Road in Manorhaven. To improve our efficiency in different things, I built a target--wooden target--with the help of Nitty Carpenter. It was an angle iron, and we made a target, which worked good. That was around here for a long time, that target. And you didn't

have time--get time--until you hit the target, which--and we improved our aims at the target. I was, when I raced, I was a thrower on the ladder. I was a runner, three-man ladder. I used to bring the dummy down--seventy-five pound dummy. I was in motor pump on the nozzle. I was in efficiency on the nozzle. We was the first to start ... [END OF TAPE 1; BEGIN TAPE 2] ...

Q: Okay. So, you were saying about the racing. The--Atlantic's and Protection.

TM: Atlantic's--we was the first, and Atlantic's, to couple--one-man couple it. We brought that in. Our racing hose, we had to skin 'em to make them single jacket.

Q: Big heavy double jacket hose.

TM: It was heavy--big jacket. We took--we had to have three full turns. And each man who was a coupler--Joe Wright was one, and Nitty Carpenter was the other. Just to study one team. When we made that couplin', and each guy was responsible knew the starting point, and he could just twist his wrist and the coupler was on. And as he kept runnin' along, and they had--always had to have two good pullers, which is the same as they use today. But we brought that into racing.

Q: The pullers?

TM: No. That type--before, they used to stop and two man couple up. One held and one ...

Q: I gotcha.

TM: You see?

Q: Yeah.

TM: That's what it was in them days. But we brought this one man in, which was more efficient, with two good pullers, and a nozzle man had to be fast. And he was down and straightened out, ready for his target. And every--they kept turnin' on. So ...

Q: Let me get--let me see if I understand this. Before you did that, they would run the hose out, stop, and connect it, or ...

TM: They would connect--stop and connect, yes. But this way, we kept runnin'.

Q: Uh huh.

TM: So that's how--but they were, at that time, with that, was about fourteen, sixteen seconds with doing the two man. But then we brought it down to thirteen as you could go. Then we brought it down, when we had the big run-off with Atlantic over Glen Cove.

Q: That was what? Thirty-what?

TM: That was about '31 or '32--somewhere around there.

Q: What was--what happened there?

TM: Well, we came down three times in efficiency. We tied three times.

Q: With Atlantic's?

TM: With the Atlantic's. And the fourth time we came down, we beat them by one second.

Q: That's amazing. Three ties.

TM: Yeah. Three ties.

Q: That's amazing.

TM: And what rooting we got.

Q: Just Protection yourself, or just the team?

TM: Just Protection. That was Protection. Because the individual teams, as I said before, it was the three--and ... [they were firemen] ... We would practice together. And Guinea Pete [Pete Biscaro] over in Atlantic's, he had a racing truck, a Pierce Arrow. He put the little tires on it. He put a down-draught carburetor on it. Our Pierce Arrow, Al Gross used to work on it. He was a hell of a good mechanic. That Pierce Arrow was fast. It was big wheels. Had two brakes. Guinea Pete over there put four-wheel brakes on that Pierce Arrow. And when that came on the course, it just took the--took the first contest over there.

Q: Then everybody put four brakes on the truck.

TM: And then it started the four brakes--brakes. That's when--about '36, I think, we got the Buick. We bought it from Stannard Brothers. And there was a guy up there--Dan Stannard, he was a member of our company.

Q: That's the building on South Bayles and Main Street.

TM: That's right. And Dan Stannard, he was the head mechanic up there. I remember one Sunday, we was going to a tournament the next day or week--that week. And we was out practicing with the Buick, and she was loadin' up in the carburetor. So, I called Dan. And he lived down here on Main Street. And he said, "What's the trouble?" I said,

"Well, we've got a tournament tomorrow, and," I said, "this truck is not worth even taking, Dan. Can you do us a favor and have a look at it?" He said, "Bring it up to the shop." He came up and opened up his shop, and he called Conklin--Russ Conklin up in the park. He was a head mechanic up there. So, between Dan and him, they changed and put a new carburetor on it. Then he said, "Take it down on the course." And they took it down on the course, and they tried it out, and it didn't load up. And Conklin said, "No, that's not quite right." He said, "Let me fool with it a little bit more." So, they fooled with it a little bit more, and they got it down perfect. So, she was all set. But that was how--now, Dan didn't have to do that, but he was a hell of a good guy. And he was up to be a fifty year member in this company, but he moved out. He made one mistake. He moved out of--he moved to up New York State. And that's why he couldn't become a fifty year member.

Q: Moved out of the district.

TM: He moved out of the district.

Q: Yeah.

TM: But he was--you know, he was--he was a quiet guy, a nice guy. Another nice old guy was Henry Wenner.

Q: He was a member?

TM: Yeah, Henry Wenner was a member. And we used to call him "Snookie." In fact, we'd go to--with your father, and then we'd go down to this grave every year at 3rd and Elmwood.

Q: A lot of guys had nicknames.

TM: All that period of time, it was nicknames. My name was "Skip."

Q: Skip?

TM: Yeah.

Q: And how did that come about?

TM: I don't know. I was skipping along once, or something. ... [??] ... and some of the ... [Polish?] ... boys was Froggy because they leap like a frog. And then there's Wes Seifts. He was "Wink," because he used to wink (laughs), you know. That was just the way that was in them days.

Q: How about, did Irv Foster or Bill Hewitt have nicknames?

TM: Yes. Irv Foster was "Irish."

Q: Irish?

TM: Yeah.

TM: Bill Hewitt, I didn't--I don't think he ever had a nickname. He was a damn good Treasurer, Bill Hewitt was.

Q: You hear--you always hear, well I always heard Bill Hewitt and Irv Foster.

TM: Yes.

Q: Bill Hewitt and Irv Foster. Bill Hewitt and Irv Foster. They were really prominent men in the company.

TM: I would say they was leaders. I mean, leaders. Because what they--say, if Bill Hewitt give a Treasurer's report, and the money was skimped. Now, when we built this new building--not this building, but the other building--the Bank of North Hempstead went broke. We had our savings in there. But they had no mortgage. So, what happened, we didn't have any savings or anything. So, what they did, they turned the mortgage over

and paid off their mortgage for the building, and ... [the same as the town was let go] ... you see. Other words, they just transferred the mortgage, paid off the mortgage, paid off the creditors, which, when the bank went bad. Now, he had a period of time there was very little money to work with. And he would preach poverty. And you had to preach poverty in them days. It's not like today, you hear them get up on the floor and they say, "We want this. We want so much to go upstate." When we first went upstate, I think we got six dollars a man. Of course, you could get a room for a dollar, you know. But four or five of us would get together and pay the gas in the car. We'd go up in the car. Or whoever took the truck up. You got the expense money for gas. I mean--and we was glad to race. We had good times. There's one picture in the firehouse there on that one racing team, there's only three of us left. There's Jake [Mahoney], Mikey Henderson, and myself. All the rest of them's dead.

Q: Did--now we're talking about Bill Hewitt and Irv Foster.

TM: Yes.

Q: Now, Irv Foster was a Trustee, correct?

TM: Later on in life.

Q: Yeah. He was ...

TM: Irv went up the chairs. He became a Foreman of this company, and he was a good Foreman. He got married that year when I came in the company. And it was a tradition to give dishes. You chipped in a buck each, and you went down to the house and wished them well. They'd have a little party. He may buy a keg of beer and a few sandwiches, and you met the bride. And next thing you know, the bride would be up here too with the Auxiliary. And ...

Q: It was expected.

TM: ... it was expected.

Q: Sure.

TM: And Joe Wright got married. Joe Hoffer was married when I got in. Arnold Foster was married. He was married to Joe Wright's sister.

Q: A lot of intermarriages ...

TM: Other words, this is known as brothers and brother-in-laws and, I mean, it was a tradition here. The same as the three Dickinsons was in this company. And them Lewises. There was four Lewises was in this company, I mean, at one time.

Q: I know your--I know, because my family's been in for a while, but you hear the young guys, or the instructions were to the young guys coming in, "Be careful what you say about anybody, because they're--somehow they're related to somebody else." Right?

TM: Yeah (laughs).

Q: And it'll get back to them. When you joined, were you--you were married or you weren't?

TM: No.

Q: You weren't?

TM: I was only eighteen (laughs). My God, no. When I come in, I was eighteen.

Q: How did your wife accept it when--well, she knew you were in the company, right?

TM: Well, she knew I was in the fire company, and, in fact, I was married in 1941. And I lived up in the Stannard Building there. And, in 1942, I went on the cops, and Artie Olson was the one that took my place. And then he went on to become Foreman of this company. So, when I first lived up in the apartment, I was running to every fire, running

over to the Flower Hill, which was close to me, to ride to the trucks. And she said, "This is getting to be an awful habit. Every night at supper time." We had just sat down at supper, the fire horn'd blow. Out the door I'd go. But that's the way it was. Well, she got used to it (laughs).

Q: She got used to it. And it never caused any real problems then.

TM: No problems. The fire company never were any problems with our life.

Q: When you joined, you were the first of your family to join?

TM: Yes.

Q: Did your brothers or your mother and your father think any differently of you when you joined? I mean, they were proud of you, or it was just something you were going to do, or ...

TM: Well, when I joined the fire company and we started to go to fires, and if anyone in the family heard the fire horn go, you was woke up and you was told, and up we'd go.

Q: They would make sure you got up out of bed?

TM: Make sure we got--my mother, when we was racing, my mother was our biggest fan.

Q: She was.

TM: She went upstate with us. And she sat in the stands. And she had her program, and she watched--marked down all the times and everything else, which, she got so interested in the fire company, I mean, the fellows--she knew 'em all. I mean, and she always thought everyone was a perfect gentleman, and she, which they all treated her very nice.

Q: That's nice.

TM: And they proved that when she died; they was all there.

Q: That's nice. How about your friends? Did they treat you any differently or were all your friends in the fire department?

TM: Well, most--a lot of my friends was in the fire company. In fact, we got some of our friends in the fire company. And they all--all turned out very well.

Q: It was a good thing to do, then, to join the fire department.

TM: It was one of the best things to do. I mean, you can't get away from it. There was no--I

mean, here was a lousy depression, and here's men that work in the City and they was out of work. They was working on W.P.A., and here's another thing that might be of interest to the company. Due to the fact there was an awful lot of grass fires, through the W.P.A.-and Work Progress Administration--they just asked a few--George and Irv Foster and a few of them. Tony Murro who was Chief at the time. No, Con Lawrence was Chief. And Tony Murro. They went to W.P.A., and they asked them if--got permission the people had these lots. You'd maybe get five or six grass fires in a day. Could they--if they got permission, could they burn off these lots. So, we worked for about two weeks, burning off different lots. We used the Laraby truck, and we'd lay out a length of hose. I mean, four or five links of hose, nozzle. Any danger, we'd burn around where danger was. The water was down, then watch the wind and burn off the lot, you know, and cut down on a lot of the grass fires we was gettin'. So, it was Wag Larkins, he was in charge. Georgie Wood drove the truck. And there was Kelly. There was Mount Carey. Two or three guys from Flower Hill and a couple, two or three, from the Atlantic's. We used to go out eight o'clock in the morning.

Q: Spend all day doing it or ...

TM: Spend all day burning off the lots.

Q: You had no tanks of water on the truck, right? There was no ...

TM: No. No. You had brooms, and we had--if it was too bad, we would use brush hooks and cut it all down, because before you would even start, to make it safe. And that was it.

Q: Preventive maintenance, I guess you would call it.

TM: Yeah. Well, it was just something that they felt--I mean, it was at that time, if you wasn't married, you couldn't get a job. I mean, that was the first question. If you were single, you was out of luck. I mean, unfortunately, I used to work mostly in the summer months and then get laid off in the winter. And that's why you were always looking for steady work, and then you finally got a steady job, you stuck by it and you figured civil service ...

Q: Sure. You said when you got in, it was the Depression ...

TM: Yeah.

Q: ... so, you know, just everybody congregated, say, around the firehouse.

TM: Yes, yes.

Q: Did you notice as the years went by and you got out of the Depression in the '40s and the '50s, did the attitudes of the members change? You know, were they more ...

TM: No, I would say the old members that you grew up with, there's a lot of strange faces come in here, and we would all be on good speaking terms. We all knew who we were. We kept an interest in--with the fellows--even the young fellows that had just come in. And it was more or less--I mean, it was always a close-knit company.

Q: You always had a group to take over for another group.

TM: Yeah.

Q: ... I guess, as time went on.

TM: That's right.

Q: Yeah.

TM: I would say--I would say the average fireman who was very active in this company is about twelve years. Really active. And then, he gets married and that man is responsible which, God knows when you start to have kids and they go to school, and "take 'em here, take 'em here. Take 'em to Girl Scouts, take 'em there." That's all time-consuming. So, naturally, something has to go a little bit. So, they're lucky if they get maybe down twice a month ... [at the place.] ... If there's a fire, they're there. They're right there to give you

a hand, you know. I mean, that's the way--I don't think we ever really suffered for manpower in this company. There was always a waitin' list.

Q: Yeah, I had to wait.

TM: Yeah.

Q: I had to wait.

TM: There was always a waitin' list.

Q: Were there any requirements for points? Did you have to make so many fires or when you first got in?

TM: No. That came later in the day. That came later in the day.

Q: So, when you first got in, you ...

TM: Other words--other words, you had to--they kept records, and you had to make so many fires or you'd give an excuse that you was working. In other words, an officer, "Hey, Tom, why didn't you get to that fire today?" Well, you was out of town. How could you go?

Q: Did they do that equally? Like you were a rookie. Did they call you rookies then, or probationary members?

TM: Oh, well, a rookie was always in the fire department.

Q: Yeah, they always called you--that was the term they used for you.

TM: Yeah, yes. It was always there.

Q: Did they--if you were a rookie and they said that to you, would they also say that to a guy--an older member? "Why didn't you make the fire today?" or ...

TM: Yes, yes.

Q: Everybody equally.

TM: Everyone was equal.

Q: Everybody was expected to participate.

TM: That's right. That's right. They would say, "Why didn't you make that one today? You

missed it," you see. They would never say, "You have to make it." It was always, "Why didn't you make it?"

Q: No excuses (laughs).

TM: You see?

Q: Yeah.

TM: And, all right, you might have had an excuse that's legitimate.

Q: But if you just said, "Because I didn't want to go," that wasn't legitimate.

TM: And then, they would--someone would say, "Now, listen, you're getting a little lax." So, "Improve yourself."

Q: It was more--I guess there was more or less pressure from the group ...

TM: That's right.

Q: ... to keep you in line.

TM: In other words--other words, an officer didn't have to worry about it. He would get in front of the group. You would try to keep up with--do your share. You see? As I said, the unwritten law.

Q: Did you have many members drop out?

TM: We had an awful lot of men drop out for non-payment of dues.

Q: Because of the Depression, they couldn't afford ...

TM: Because of the Depression, yeah.

Q: Do you think they might--well, I'm sure that it was legitimate. But do you think some men used that as an excuse because they just didn't want to do it, or ...

TM: There was some men couldn't put food on the table.

Q: Yeah.

TM: And if you heard about it, you tried to help 'em in a nice way. As I said, dig a mess of clams, get some corn. "You want to take some of that home?"

Q: You'd make it seem like a ...

TM: Yeah.

Q: ... not like a charity. You'd make it sound like ...

TM: That's right. "Do you want to take some of it home?" You'd bring up a bushel of apples.

"Anyone want some apples?" you know. That was the way it was done.

Q: Help each other.

TM: Yeah, just we didn't think anything of it.

Q: Now, getting back to the points. When did they start making it mandatory that you had to make so many points?

TM: The points come in, well, let's see, it didn't come in with Poughkeepsie ... [when we had that time up there] ... That was in nineteen--

Q: In the '40s or '50s?

TM: I would say--I would say--I would say the late '30s. About '38 or '39, somewhere around

in there.

Q: And how come they had--they decided they had to do that?

TM: Well, other words, the company was given a little bit of money to go upstate, for the members. And some of the members that didn't have--wasn't active enough--they didn't make enough fires and didn't go to company meetings, they was always looking to go upstate or somewhere, so they put on some restrictions. So, they decided on the point system.

Q: So you had to earn what you were getting to go to something.

TM: That's right. The only--only one I had to ask special permission for was a fellow by the name of Joe Richter. He was killed in the War in 19--the team we had there was about 1940. And Joe was in the company just about six months and he wasn't eligible. But he was a damn good racing man. So, I asked permission from the floor to include Joe Richter to go upstate and get the money. And, which they passed and approved. They didn't want to break up the team, which was nice of them. I think ... [I was in ?] ... when they did that.

Q: Oh, wow. It tore a whole chunk of your hand off there.

TM: No, it just cut right across there.

Q: Across the palm?

TM: Yeah.

Q: How many stitches did you get there?

TM: Oh, it was around twenty-three or twenty-four.

Q: How'd you do that?

TM: I went up in the attic of a house.

Q: Was it at a fire, or was this ...

TM: At a fire. Attic of a house. And there was a window on each end. And I opened the latch and went to push out the window, like that, and the glass went out. You know, just didn't want to break the window.

Q: Yeah, right.

TM: You see. There was nothing up there but smoke, and I just wanted to get the smoke out. I opened one window at the other end opened the other one, and so I cut my hand. I didn't realize it. Then the next thing I knew, I was full of blood.

Q: Looked like it was a big deep cut.

TM: Yeah, that was--in fact, I cut the tendons. It just touched them. Just touched them. The worst part of it was, Dr. Stevenson who was a member of this company, he was just a young doctor here at the time. He's the one that sewed it up. So, he give me a drink of scotch before he started scrubbing with green soap and a brush. And then ...

Q: Scrubbing the wound?

TM: Scrub the wound with the brush and the green soap.

Q: Oh!

TM: And--and then, he sewed it up and said I'll give you a shot--a tetanus shot--and he said, "I'll see you tomorrow." So, I walked into his office the next day. I went home, and I couldn't sleep. And I put on a pair of pants, and was in my shoes--no shoes. And I was walking around in the wet grass. The goddamn thing started to throb and throb and throb. So, I took a walk, and I walked down to the beach, about a mile and a half,

barefooted. Came back, laid down on the couch and went to sleep. And my mother woke me up. She didn't know about it. She said--yeah, she did know about it. I told her when I came in. And she said, "You have to go to the doctor." So, I got up and drove myself up to the doctor. So, the first thing Stevenson said to me, he used to speak that way--"What the hell's the matter with you? Want to kill yourself? I thought you was going to be a hospital case last night." He said, "You're lucky as hell." He said, "You just touched all them tendons, and none of them was cut." So, that's a permanent scar from the fire company (laughs).

Q: What year was that?

TM: Oh, I don't quite remember. I would say about '40, somewhere around there. '39 or '40.

Q: But the points, now. Getting back to the points. You said they originally set those up because guys wanted to go upstate, and they gave them money.

TM: Yeah.

Q: Now, eventually, at some point along the way, they changed it so you had to make so many points to stay in the company.

TM: Yes.

Q: Was there a problem with men not making the fires, and is that why they did that?

TM: Well, it came up after, yes. Yes, it came up after. I mean, they thought they was doing it for the benefit of to make it interesting and get rid of some of the dead wood. And I don't know if maybe some of the dead wood was approached properly at that time, they would still remain in. Some of them didn't deserve to stay in. I mean, if that was a person who did something wrong, he didn't deserve to stay in. Of course, in this company there was a couple of fellows a way back that was charged with arson.

Q: In the '30s, '40s?

TM: No, back before that. In the '20s. And, so there was other little things. Somebody was dismissed from the company and he was convicted. And some of them had other problems. Some of them moved away, and there was a hell of a lot of--just to think back, if you look at some of the old pictures and think of the men that has passed through those doors at Protection, I mean, there's always been a hundred membership, so I would say it must be about four or five thousand men that ...

Q: Could be something in that ball park.

TM: ... that were in some way connected with this company.

Q: It'd be something interesting to look into, actually how many members. Yeah. Were there any, when you got in, any charter members still in the company?

TM: The only charter men who was in was Gene Carpenter.

Q: They all ...

TM: And Colesie [John Coles] was supposed to be a charter member. And Walt Crooker was supposed to be a charter member.

Q: Were they active at all when you got in, or was it, they were too old?

TM: Colesie was--always directed traffic or something. Colesie was a blacksmith. He had a shop up on Bayless Avenue--no, Maryland Avenue. North Maryland Avenue.

Q: Oh, on the other side.

TM: Yeah, North Maryland Avenue. In fact Colesie--I'd give Colesie, when I was on the racing team, I gave him a pattern to make for a "kinker."

Q: That's when you fold the hose over.

TM: When you fold the hose. And he made one out of iron. And we came down and went and bought a hose, and we'd throw that kinker on, and you'd have the nozzle on before you'd let go of the kinker. Some of the tricks you started to do when you look back in the racing team days.

Q: You used to--when you raced, you used to use the trucks you used to go to fires with.

TM: That's right.

Q: You didn't have special equipment.

TM: When we raced, we used the big LaFrance and the pumper. We used six-inch suction hose. And your three men jumped off the truck with that suction hose.

Q: A motor pump?

TM: And motor pump. One--we asked--one slipped coupling was allowed. One would put it out on the hydrant, and he would open up the hydrant.

Q: You would have--you'd physically have to turn the hydrant to open it. There was no gauge.

TM: Turn the hydrant. Yeah. No gauge. No. No gauge. You had to turn that hydrant wide open. Then, these two men, instead of threadin' it on there, they used to hold it on by two ears on the intake of the suction.

Q: Would that have a slip coupling on it?

TM: Nothing.

Q: Nothing, just your hose.

TM: Just the plain couple at the two wheels. So, you would hold it up there right against the pump with all your might, and the pump would take it.

Q: Oh, it would suck it in.

TM: Other words, it was suction.

Q: Right.

TM: Okay. But you have to coordinate everything perfectly. Now, if you don't have that hydrant shut down, and you let go up here, you got a discharged suction. So, one night

practicing down on Cambridge Avenue--yeah, Cambridge Avenue, across from Pikey Hyde house ... [was built] ... And Joe Wright was on the suction with Nitty Carpenter. And Nitty had to let go of the suction. And the suction washed Joe Wright right under the American LaFrance right across to the ... [?] ... He went--and he came out with not a scratch on him. Yeah.

Q: Were there many accidents back then when you raced?

TM: No, outside of a broken arm or skinned knees and heels off your shoes, and fingers. But very few. Very few.

Q: Did you have any organized softball teams or baseball teams ...

TM: Yes.

Q: ... or just pick-up.

TM: Organized.

Q: They were organized.

TM: We had a team; Atlantic's had one; Flower Hill had one; we had one. Italian-American

Society had one. We had a baseball league up there at Main Street School, every night a different schedule--I mean, every week. You would play. Atlantic's had a good team with Nicky Gazzo, Al Maury, Con Lawrence played on it.

Q: Was this in the '30s?

TM: This was in the '30s. '37, '38. '37, '38. Before that, it was the Twilight League. That was hardball. But we didn't have any team in that. As I said, the only teams we played then was like Navy.

Q: So, this '37, '38 team was softball.

TM: Yeah. Yes. ... [END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A; BEGIN SIDE B] ...

Q: ... used to get organized teams with Atlantic and Flower Hill and Protection.

TM: It was a league; it was a league. And we had a lot of fun. Then, we would have a cookout or something.

Q: Did you ever play other departments, like Manhasset or ...

TM: No.

Q: You don't socialize with the other departments?

TM: Oh, we socialized then, maybe, I think it was later on that would come in. Because, I mean, we used to go to like organized sports, like the Locust Valley Yellow Jackets, they had a team. It was two fellows played there. Nitty Carpenter, Danny Cocks from our company played for the Yellow Jackets. Manhasset Redbirds, there was another football team. And the Western Front had another one over in Glen Cove. And then there was Cedarhurst. They were like semi-pro teams that went big league today, they was big league players. There, you had a lot of college boys playing on them. But Crusheas from Manhasset. They was nice fellows.

Q: Well, they're still over in Manhasset.

TM: One of them.

Q: Crushea. He plays for Manhasset Fire Department.

TM: Yeah. One of them got killed--got killed in World War II. And he was in fire tour--in the fire tournament. Then, we had the fellows by the name of Reeds. And Nineslings over in Great Neck. They had a football team, too, over there--Great Neck LC. So, that was our social, Sundays and the baseball, and ... [??] ... Red Sox, Oyster Bay, and all

those different teams in that period of time. It made a very interesting Sunday. And then later on, they came into like midget racing, over in Freeport stadium.

Q: You'd go as a group?

TM: We would go as a group.

Q: Did the wives go with you to something like that or just ...

TM: No, no. Just mostly guys. And I had a--one time, it was very funny. There was all kinds of tricks played on you. What they did to me, I had a Plymouth convertible that you could play the windshield down on. And it was a nice car. It had a rumble seat in it, and it was low, and it was a fast car. Really a fast, old car. So, Bunny Leitz, Mount Carey, Kelly, myself, we was going to Westbury to have a nickel beer--but I'd take us over and have a nickel beer. So, going over, we started to smell flesh burning. And what the hell did they do? They took an eel, and they strapped it with wire to my exhaust--hot exhaust pipe on the car. So, I could never--I couldn't get that off that exhaust, that burnt flesh. It was burned to a crisp when it--but it still remained in that car when you had it closed. But that was the kind of a trick they would play on you. Bunny Leitz was the greatest guy for tricks. But, you know, he couldn't take it.

Q: The tricks the guys played, they'd all be taken as jokes, or would some guys get mad ...

TM: As jokes, yes. Yes.

Q: Would people get mad at each other or ...

TM: Oh, no. No, no.

Q: I would. I would've (laughs).

TM: No, they took it as a good joke. But it was one of those things. I mean, you--if you was a sorehead, they would keep it up on you. But you just let it roll with the punches and ...

Q: And they'd know who to keep pulling the tricks on.

TM: Yeah.

Q: Now, you had two brothers also join the company.

TM: Yes.

Q: Were they far behind you?

TM: Jake was one year.

Q: One year behind you.

TM: Yeah.

Q: And how about George is, I think, five years behind us. Five years behind Jake.

Q: And Jake's the oldest? Yeah, Jake's the oldest.

TM: Jake's the oldest.

Q: And George is the youngest?

TM: George is the youngest.

Q: And did they want to join because you joined and they saw what you were doing?

TM: Oh, yes. Yeah, the only one was George. "Oh, I wouldn't be a fireman." And when he got into being a fireman, he--you couldn't get him to leave the place. He got in with Herbie Carpenter, and he got in with Morrison [Alexander Morrison], and he got in with Eddie Poole and Porky [Harold] Poole and Sassy [Arthur Poole] and all that crowd that

came later. They was all the racing team. That crowd.

Q: So they all got in.

TM: Yeah. There was a whole bunch of them come in at once. Eddie Poole was a good ladder climber. And Morrison was a good ladder climber, too. But when you look back, you know, we always had a pretty good team.

Q: They were all like, they were all like eighteen when they got in, right? Probably?

TM: All close to it. Only one was like a little older. There was Geddy [Gerry Crooker] and Simmie Ludeker. And he was--Simmie was married. Geddy, I believe, was married. No, Geddy wasn't married. Nitty Carpenter was a hell of a good guy. He could do anything. Good football player. Good on the racing team. In fact, he was a driver on the racing team after Woodie [George Wood]. Mac McCarthy was the first driver, and then Woodie. I'll never forget Woodie with the Laraby. We'd put it--we would start--you'd have to push it, and then you'd run and get in. You stood so far behind it. And then, you had to run and get in the driver's seat. So, Woodie had it down. We had it down. Decided to practice it. All you have to do is run up and stop and push and go into second gear and pull the gas down. It had a gas ... [?] ... on the steering wheel, as well as one on the floor. So, he jumped on. We's all on. Here's Woodie standing on the side, coming down the course, not in the driver's seat. The quickest hook-up you ever seen, perfect

time ...

Q: And he's not driving.

TM: And he wasn't in the driver's seat (laughs). We got disqualified because he wasn't in the driver's seat. If he just crawled in the driver's seat on the way down, we wouldn't have been disqualified. So, we got disqualified for that. So, we asked the--went up and asked for the reason, and we told them we wouldn't leave the course. We wouldn't take a--then they said, "We'll tow the truck off the course" (laughs). We had a beef. And they showed us the rules, and then we had to comply by them. But it was perfect. It was good. You know, when you're racing, you can tell something when it's good. I mean, same as baseball, you could tell if it's going to be a good hit. I mean, you got that feeling.

Q: Everything clicks.

TM: Everything clicks. And it had clicked, yeah. Yeah, I had to laugh that day. But we had a lot of fun. I'll never forget Poughkeepsie. We were up to this tournament. And they had like a carnival in the night time up there. It was quite a college town. There was a lot of young girls up there. And it was easy pickin' if you wanted to. All the girls would ask you up to the college hill, and one would take a walk up to College Hill. So, we went into this--it was Harry Carpenter from the Atlantic's. Nicky Gazzo, myself, Mount Carey, and a couple of others--Ray Driscoll, I think it was. And we went in to see this

girlie show. So, we get in and they charged us a dollar. And you see nothing. And then they put a couple of dancers up there all on the--and that was it. Now, they said three dollars to go in the back a little further to see it. So, a couple of 'em went in the back. And they came out, and they said it was a gyp. So, what did they do? They cut the tent ropes, and they put the old guy out of business (laughs).

Q: What happened to them?

TM: Huh?

Q: What happened to the guys that cut the ropes?

TM: Well, it was the firemen that did it.

Q: I know (laughs). Did anything happen to them?

TM: No. They just stood there and the rope "broke." They loosened the ropes up. You know how you tie the rope?

Q: Yeah.

TM: But what--the whole show was inside.

Q: Unbelievable.

TM: And then they said, "What happened?" And we lifted up the canvass and let them out.

Q: And they never knew?

TM: Never knew (laughs).

Q: Oh, boy. Unbelievable.

TM: Yeah, you know. It's--yeah, when you look back, you laugh.

Q: Did you ever--you know, you had the three companies--Flower Hill, Atlantic's, and Protection. Did you get along better with one company than you did with the other one, or was there ...

TM: I think we--there was always the rivalry between the companies, but I think they all got along very well. I think--I mean, if it was a Chief in Flower Hill, you did your job like he requested it. Chief from Atlantic's or Chief from Protection--everyone did their job and he--I mean, like you take now Tony Murro. He would come down here and say to some of us, "Do you want to go out and have a meal with me?" and he would take care--he was

an Elk at the time--he would take you over to Freeport. There was a big Elks' over there, and you'd have a nice spaghetti dinner or something. It didn't probably cost much them days, I mean, maybe seventy-five cents a plate, if it cost that. Then, you'd have a little drink of wine and you'd sit down, be sociable, and talk. But Tony would do that out of his own pocket. He was good-hearted. He was one of these guys--we had guys with fish hooks in the pockets, you know. They never wanted to pay for anything. They was always hanging back. And there's others that paid and paid and paid. And it was known, a thing like that. I mean, but you got to know them.

Q: Is there any one person that sticks out in your mind as, you know, being a good fireman or a good--just a good member of Protection? Any one special person, or is it just ...

TM: Well, I would have to pick Irv Foster.

Q: And why is that?

TM: Because I liked him. As a man, as a worker, how he did things. His tidiness, not being smutty. Very clean. Another guy stands out in my mind is Cliff Brant. Dignified ...

Q: Billy Brant's ...

TM: Billy Brant's father. Yes. Cliff Brant stood out in my mind. Walt Crooker stood out in

my mind. He could cuss you out, but he was a nice guy. Wag Larkins was a nice guy.

Joe Hoffer was a very nice man. John Lewis. I would say it was a hell of a good, bunch of, group of men. Al Gross was a nice guy. Carly Olson was a nice guy.

Q: Do you see any difference now with the current group of people, as opposed to, you know, back in the '30s or whatever?

TM: Well, I observed them very well. I think they--all the young fellows get along very well. There--some of them's clannish between themselves, which we were, too. They still sit--some of them sits at the back; some of them sits in the front.

Q: They've got their own groups.

TM: Have their own little groups, and, well, let us say, they mingle together. I mean, they do things together. And pretty soon, they'll be breaking away. They'll be, as I said, after ten or twelve years, some of them will be drifting. But the comradeship and things like that, I don't think you'll ever forget.

Q: Just goes on from generation to generation.

TM: That's right. That's right. It's been quite an experience to be a fireman for Protection Engine Company. It was an honor.

Q: And still is an honor, right?

TM: To be here and healthy, be able to sit down and talk. And how I jump all over the subject sometimes, maybe might get something out of it.

Q: Another nine years, we'll be celebrating the hundredth.

TM: Yeah.

Q: You'll have how many years in then?

TM: Nine years? I'm fifty-four this year.

Q: So, sixty-three years?

TM: Yeah.

Q: I was just at Atlantic's dinner last week, and Eddie Picardo has sixty-two or sixty-three.

TM: Yeah, I think Eddie--Eddie's about the oldest in the department now. I think Ed Lewis--I mean was the oldest in our company for a long time. Well, he came after Walter Crooker

and Wag Larkins ... [?] ... in the fifties. I thought it was--when I had twenty-five in, this company was great. Those guys, honest to goodness, you look back, there's Donald Smith; he was a young guy. All of them went off to the War and come back, and some of 'em didn't come back. There was Alec Alakna when we was a racing team. He was a little mascot for us. He would sit and watch the trucks, so no one else would touch 'em, and ...

Q: Touch 'em?

TM: ... touch 'em. Young Sassy Poole--not Sassy, the other--Peenie Poole. He was the same.

Q: You remember fellows that are in now who probably have twenty-five years in now, they used to hang around when they were like sixteen? Fifteen?

TM: Yes. Well, you take--you take the Pooles hung around. And Calvin Leitz. I mean, he got killed in the War. He used to hang around when he was a kid. And young Kaelin used to hang around when he was a kid--Tom Kaelin lived over here in the corner. Bert Carpenter was quite a racing team man, too and baseball player. He was a hell of a nice guy. Bert, he was a good Foreman.

Q: All families--a lot of families.

TM: Yeah.

Q: A lot of families.

TM: Yeah. There's Mount Carey. He never drove a car.

Q: No?

TM: No.

Q: Hmm. Every time I hear something about him, it's always good. He's such a nice--
such a big man, but such a nice ...

TM: He was an easy--Mount was an easygoing man. Nice man. Nice man. He worked hard.

Q: What'd he do?

TM: He worked on the moving vans. He worked for DePaul up here on the moving vans. He worked for Murphy in Great Neck. Worked with a lot of the guys over at Alerts, Jitney and Fischer, and all that crowd--old crowd.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add or to say, or anything? Any observations you may

have about the company?

TM: Well, all I can see in this company is progress.

Q: Progress.

TM: It has progressed since I came in. And I think we always had good equipment and it was always kept up good. Of course, we had our share with accidents with the trucks. I think one of the things that stands out in my mind was Bill McCarthy was driving the American LaFrance up Main Street, and up around the Stannard Building, he hit a butter and egg truck with that, and, believe me, that truck could stand a little damage. I don't know how much damage, there was already something damaged on it. That's about all. But there wasn't a hell of a lot left of the butter and egg truck.

Q: A lot of butter and eggs on the ground?

TM: Yeah. And that was all of the--"Hey, Mac, you can't drive." That was always the saying, you know.

Q: Stuck with him the rest of his ...

TM: That stuck with him for a long time. As I said, Woodie [George Wood] was a hell of a

good driver, too. Perry Henderson was a ... [?] ...

Q: I remember hearing a story about Mr. Wood, George Wood.

TM: Yeah.

Q: That he didn't have his keys, and there was a fire one day, so he broke the glass and climbed in the window.

TM: He was noted for that.

Q: Did it quite often.

TM: Yes. Back window.

Q: He lived around the firehouse?

TM: Yeah. He lived over--him and his brother Stanley lived over Adams Street.

Q: Oh, where Dick ...

TM: Dick Wood lives today. That's his ...

Q: That's right.

TM: In fact, his father--his father did the plumbing and heatin' in this building.

Q: George Wood did the plumbing in here.

TM: Yeah, the father. He did that, and Stanley did the--worked for him. And George worked for him. So the Woods did the renovation in 1931, '32. They did the renovation of this building. And plumbing.

Q: A lot of the work was done by members.

TM: No, it was contracted. There was a contract put out for that building.

Q: Oh, that's right. Pollock & Wysong.

TM: Pollock & Wysong, yeah.

Q: That's right, yeah. And how about generally, when there was work to be done, say--say you needed some electric outlets somewhere, or you needed to build something, would the members chip in and do that, or would you get somebody ...

TM: Oh, yes.

Q: ... from the outside.

TM: That would be done--that would be done ...

Q: Like today.

TM: Yeah, like today. I mean, it would--I mean, after all, in that period, short period of time, there wasn't much needed to be done. I mean, it was a new building. Everything was--I mean, of course, you didn't have television in them days; you had a radio. And it was nice to listen to the radio. "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain," and songs like that. "Red Sails in the Sunset." And, you listen--liked to listen to the news. And Roosevelt's fireside chats. Bruno Hoffman when he was executed. Lindbergh, when they--with the kidnapping. All the things that went on. Six day bicycle races in New York that was going on.

Q: It would be on the radio.

TM: Yeah.

Q: Did you ever have trouble with the neighbors?

TM: No.

Q: No? They didn't bother--the horns didn't bother them when they ...

TM: The guy lived next door to us over here, him--and his son was the supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead.

Q: Would that be in the house where the ... [? room is now] ...

TM: That's where the rec room is now. Ed Gunn. And we didn't finish the little piece along side here with dirt and stuff. So, I'll never forget, it was coming around one Memorial Day. "Snookie" Wenner--they wanted to put a flagpole up--Snookie said, "I'll make the flagpole. So, Snookie went home, cut the pipes, brought the flagpole. And we raised that flagpole, set it in the concrete with a ladder--that one that was out there, just came down with this new building. We cleaned that place out, landscaped it, we planted flowers and rock garden, which I did. I got top soil up in--up in Jankowski's farm.

Q: Which is where?

TM: Which is out Port Washington Boulevard, where New Salem is today. Where New

Salem is.

Q: Was that an agricultural farm, or is it like a ...

TM: No, it's a ...

Q: ... cows and sheep and all that kind of stuff?

TM: Yeah, yeah. It's agriculture. We had planted so many fields and stuff up there--Walter's family. So, we got the top soil from Colonial. They own the property, Colonial. So, we was up at Roger ... [Smith's] ... having a few beers one night, and this guy from Colonial came in, and he bought the house. A drink, and one thing led to another, and we asked him has he got any topsoil up there? "Oh, oh plenty of it up there." So, we asked him could we have a few loads. We was telling him what we were doin'. "Sure, go ahead." So, took the hose out of the old Cadillac and went up and got the top soil--two or three guys--and we brought it down, carried it round the back, carried it down the side here, and put a few inches of top soil on the thing. And we got some grass to grow. And then, Irv Foster and them, they got paid from the company to fix a little drain out there, because there was a drain, been carried away. There was a short fence there--they bought that after from Chapin, that piece of property. It was owned by us, first, but we sold it to help pay for the firehouse, with the old times. There was a shortage of money we had then. And so anyway, we fixed a little rock garden and went back to Ed Gunn. Him and

his wife used to walk out in the evening and have a look at it, and stand on the ramp and look at it. "Very nice." And then, we trimmed his hedge and made things nice for him, and then, the only trouble is you could do a little work; you would spend about two hours talking to him, you know. He liked to talk. I mean, he just--and it was nice. And then, up the street was Alexander lived, and there was a nice--couple nice girls. I know Connie was a nice girl; I went to school with her. And, later on, there was Tim Bird lived in that stucco house, and Walker. And who lived across the street here? I forget. No trouble with any of 'em. They expected the fire horn to go off; they knew it was here. In fact, it was a lot louder in them days. We watched a couple of boys up in school there one day, and that fire horn went out, and the both of them jumped about two foot off the ground.

Q: (Laughs).

TM: It was--it was an interestin' life.

Q: Well, you had a--you made the rock garden up when you were a young member, and you're still taking care of the grounds today, right?

TM: Yeah.

Q: New grounds.

TM: Yes, Pete. And all them flowers is donated by somebody, you know. You come down and somebody carries--Bunny Leitz's wife carried down the geraniums that she bought. And probably geraniums cost about fifteen to twenty cents, them days.

Q: Now, they're three-fifty, four dollars ...

TM: Yeah, yeah.

Q: ... a plant.

TM: How times has changed, and prices and money. I mean, a dollar them days was a dollar. But today--well, I don't know, Pete, what else we're going to say.

Q: That's about it, I guess.

TM: Yeah.

Q: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

TM: Okay.

Q: Very good.