

**PRESERVING OUR HISTORY: ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO**  
**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: Wade Phillips

INTERVIEWER: Kathelene Smith

DATE: January 20, 2010

KS: It's Wednesday, January 20, 2010, and we're here to take an oral history of Mr. Wade Phillips for the Preserving our History: Rotary Club of Greensboro oral history project. Good morning, Mr. Phillips. How are you this morning?

WP: Just fine. Thank you.

KS: Great. Thank you. Well, let's start out with some biographical information. Tell me when and where you were born.

WP: I was born in Greensboro, in Sunset Hills, on Tremont Drive in 1925; December 19, 1925.

KS: And tell me about your family and your home life when you were growing up.

WP: Well, I lived there until I got married – on that block. Well, I was raised on that block. But as a teenager growing up, younger than a teen, pre-teen, there were thirty-four children of all ages within that one block. And we ranged all up and down on everybody's front yard and back yard. And each mother had the permission to discipline any child on their property. So, the whole block raised all of us.

KS: It takes a village.

WP: It takes a village. There were three children, three of us siblings, at first. Later on, a fourth child came along, but I was about ready to go off to college then. But it was very – community, just that one community, had my bicycle, ranged all over the city with my bike. No restrictions whatsoever. Go anywhere.

KS: Amazing.

WP: And when suppertime came, mothers would go out on the front porch and holler, and we'd come running.

KS: So, you liked to bike. What other kind of things did you like to do growing up?

WP: That's about it. Just exploring everywhere.

KS: So, what did your parents do?

WP: My dad was at UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro], back then it was WC, Woman's College. Well, prior to that, when I was born he was president – excuse me, principal – of what is now Grimsley High School. He was the first principal at Greensboro Senior High in 1929.

KS: That's amazing.

WP: And, then, the Depression came along. And they cut all teachers' salaries by fifty percent. He had a wife and three kids at home. He couldn't make it on even a principal's – half of a principal's salary. So, for one year we moved to Middlesboro, Kentucky, where my dad was with Blue Bell Overalls. But as soon as a job became available back in Greensboro we moved back. He was head of then the Community Chest, United Way of today. And at that time, Dr. Clinton Jackson, chancellor at WC, was the titular head of Community Chest, and he liked the way my dad ran the Community Chest, so he hired him. And my dad was on campus for, I believe it was thirty-three or thirty-four years doing four jobs. He would recruit girls – it was a woman's college back then – he would recruit girls from all over the state. He traveled the state going to high schools. Once the students came to campus he found jobs for them on campus to help pay tuition. When they graduated, he found jobs for them. He was job placement, and he was the public relations director. So, today I think they have a dean in charge of each of those departments. He had two secretaries in this little house here on campus. He had the front – it was an old house. He had the living room as his office. But he would dictate to one secretary, and she would take it in shorthand. And she would go start typing those letters. And another secretary would come in, and he would continue dictating to this one. He kept two secretaries going. All the time. Four jobs. Did I say there are four deans today doing what he was doing all on his own?

KS: Now, when you were talking about where he worked – we'll go ahead and talk about this now.

WP: OK.

KS: You pointed to a picture in the book by Allen Trelease, *Changing Assignments: A Pictorial History of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*. And I believe I see that's picture 111-32. And this is the – and there's also a picture on 111-35 of where it was. So, this is actually the house, it was like a Victorian house, but that's where his office was?

WP: That's right. That's where his office was.

KS: So, could you tell me a little bit about his office?

WP: Well, it was a former house— he was in the living room for his office, and two of the rooms for the two secretaries. I know them very well – knew them very well. Upstairs on the second floor was the news bureau— forgotten the man’s name that ran it then. But, again, they have a dean for that. But I went to school at Curry [High School]. Started at Lindley Elementary, but, then, at the sixth grade our whole family – I was in the sixth grade, my sister was in third grade, and my brother was in the first grade. But we started at Curry. And at the end of the day we would go run down the street to our dad’s office and wait to go home. We were part of WC back then, going to Curry. I didn’t graduate from Curry. I transferred over to Greensboro Senior High for my last three years, ten, eleven, and twelfth. I stayed for the twelfth grade. But I guess that’s enough of that.

KS: Now, what did your mom do? Did she stay at home?

WP: She was a housewife. Well, before the kids came along, she taught. She was a teacher, history and English. But when children came, she was a house – what do you call it?

KS: Stay-at-home mom?

WP: Stay-at-home mom. Thank you. She was a stay-at-home mom.

KS: So, you said you had several brothers and sisters.

WP: Yes.

KS: Younger or older?

WP: I was the eldest. I had a sister three years younger, and a brother three years younger than that. And then, nine years later, another sister. But I was about ready to go off to college then. So, I didn’t – she was after us. We grew up as three children, and then the trailer came along.

KS: What were your favorite subjects in school?

WP: I would say math.

KS: Really?

WP: Yes.

KS: Good for you.

WP: I had a math teacher that was very interesting and made the whole thing with math interesting. That's one reason I – well, by the time I would have graduated I would have been only sixteen years old. And I don't think my dad wanted me to go down to Chapel Hill a sixteen-year-old kid. So, he insisted I stay for the twelfth grade. It was optional back then, twelve grades. So, in the twelfth grade I took Solid Geometry, I took Trigonometry, I took College Algebra, Physics. I got all of these tough subjects. It was fun. But when I got down to Chapel Hill I was able to place out of freshman math and freshman English and so forth, because I had taken the twelfth grade at Greensboro Senior High, now Grimsley High School.

KS: So, that was what I was going to ask you next. So, you went on to Chapel Hill?

WP: Oh, yes.

KS: And so tell me about your college days.

WP: Well, first of all it was war time, '43, middle of '43. So, I graduated May of '43. July 1st I went into the Navy in the NROTC program down at Chapel Hill.

KS: NROTC?

WP: Naval Reserve Officer Training, NROTC. Today, 2010, the NROTC is maybe six or eight students. Back then they were a battalion, 350 students in the NROTC. So, my entire college career was NROTC. Navy paid for food, board, room, tuition, and even paid me a fee for going as a Seaman Apprentice. But in college I got a degree in two years and four months. But we were taking – I was taking eighteen-plus hours every semester. But I – quarter or semester. It was every four months. But two years and four months, I got a degree.

KS: Now, were you taking separate courses for Naval Training?

WP: Yes.

KS: Officer training and, then, also regular college courses? Oh goodness.

WP: That's correct. My primary major was Naval Science, but my second major was math. So, I did get enough hours in both math and Naval Science, and I got total hours – I did get a BA degree out of it. Most of my classmates, they took just the minimum. They got a certificate, which is fine, but I went ahead and got extra and got my degree out of it, Navy paying for it all the way through.

KS: But, then, did you go into the Navy after college?

WP: Yes.

KS: That was the catch.

WP: Oh, yes. Had to pay them back. But a little more about college. I was in the band. I played trombone. Back then it was just one band. We were the marching band, the concert band, and the pep band all the same. Today they have a different band for each one. But sometime in 1944 – now the three semesters, I don't know which one – I was never that good, but I was always third trombone – but one semester Andy Griffith and I were third trombone on the same stand. This was before he became famous. But he and I played third trombone on the same stand for one semester. He went on to bigger and better things, but that's, I guess, my one claim to fame.

KS: That's your brush with fame! Was he a nice guy?

WP: Oh, yes. I can't remember much. But just know that he was there. And, of course, he went on – that was before he wrote his – “What It Was, Was Football.” Before he became famous. But I was in the band. I was a color guard in the marching in ROTC. So, we didn't have to – when we drilled we could go over in the shade and drill instead of out on the drill parade ground. That's about all I can remember, but it was just a grind.

KS: Sounds like you were busy. I mean, not much time for fun.

WP: Well, we had some fun. Two of our classes, sophomore and junior equivalent, I lived in Old West. And this is a building that was right opposite the Y court. And every Friday night they had street dancing.

KS: Oh, that's fun. Street dancing!

WP: And particularly – now back then the only girls on campus during the winter months were pharmacy students. Excuse me, the only freshmen and sophomore girls were pharmacy students. Juniors and senior girls couldn't go to school. But the freshmen and sophomores could not go in the general arts courses. Summertime, though, the girls all came. So, we enjoyed the summertime street dancing every Friday night. So, it was not all a grind.

KS: Well, that's good.

WP: I said eighteen hours of class hours – that plus Phys Ed every day of the week and drill, marching drill, two days a week. So, it was a grind.

KS: Yes.

WP: Yes, I got a degree, but not much of a college life. I was a member of the music fraternity, of Phi Mu Alpha, I was president of my last year. But that was a semi-professional fraternity. That's about all I can remember. We ate in Swain Hall.

That was the dining hall. My daddy used to help serve down there when he was a student. So, it was still the dining hall when I was –

KS: So, your daddy went to Chapel Hill, too?

WP: Oh, yes. He – well, can I tell you about that?

KS: Sure. Please do.

WP: My mother was going to State Normal and Industrial College up here at Greensboro. That's WC. She came in 1915, graduated in 1921 – no 1916 to '21, whatever. Close to there. One year she failed chemistry and had to go to summer school down in Chapel Hill. The same year my dad failed chemistry, and they met in summer school make up chemistry class at Chapel Hill.

KS: Isn't that wonderful. And, then, they had this child who was so good in math?

WP: I was poor in chemistry.

KS: Oh.

WP: I never could grasp chemistry. They couldn't either. But that's where they met. And, of course, it's all history since then. But my dad was going to Chapel Hill, and my mother was going to State Normal.

KS: So, then, you followed in your dad's footsteps at Chapel Hill?

WP: At Chapel Hill, yep. Well, I was lucky. One of my buddies was assigned to an ROTC at University of Virginia. Others were assigned everywhere else.

KS: Oh, you were assigned? When you registered I just assumed you went right to the state college.

WP: No, I registered for the Navy, and the Navy made assignments. There were four or five of us from the Greensboro area that were in the ROTC down there with me. But of the 350 in ROTC, we were from all over the nation. Even some boys came back from the fleet. I mean, they had been regular Navy enlisted men. They enrolled in the NROTC. And we all got commissions. A few of us got degrees, but everybody was commissioned as an ensign.

KS: So, you were commissioned.

WP: As an ensign.

KS: Then what happened?

WP: OK. This is another interesting story. There were six of us brand new ensigns assigned to the Naval base at Saipan. Saipan is in the Pacific. We were all classmates. We knew each other. We rode across the country on the train. Took five days going across. Took a ship from San Francisco to Guam. Then from Guam to another ship up to Saipan. And all of us six brand new ensigns – spotless, dressed up – reported to the Naval base Captain, Navy Captain – that’s equivalent to a colonel in the Army. But he got a questionnaire from each one of us, just a one-page about ourselves. And I was kind of proud of the fact that I had a BA degree. My buddies, the other five of us, they had just gotten the certificates. But I was proud that I had taken extra courses and got my BA degree. So, I put it on there, BA degree. Well, Captain Ware, a little, short, stocky fellow, we were standing at attention. “Phillips.” “Yes, sir.” “Says here you have a college degree.” “Yes, sir.” “I guess that means you can read.” “Yes, sir.” “OK, I’ll assign you to the fleet post office for duty.” “Yes, sir.” And the next guy he assigned to the fire department, fire marshal. Next to the shore patrol, and next to port director. And just kind of off jobs. But I was assigned to the fleet post office. I never worked in a post office before or since. But I did. And I learned the basics of the Navy fleet post office for about four or five months. Then I was transferred to Guam, Com Marianas. I was assistant area postal officer for the Marianas area for another four or five months. Then I finally got my points and got out. Now, this was in ’45 and ’46. War was essentially over when I got there. It was over before I left. So, in 1946 I got discharged. Came back home, and I’ll talk about my civilian life a little bit later. But five years later I was working in the office and one of the girls called and said, “Wade, long distance.” I picked up the phone. “Wade Phillips.” “Is this Lieutenant Wade Phillips?” I said, “Who is this?” “Lieutenant Commander Somebody in Bureau of Personnel in Washington.” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Your card has dropped.” I said, “What you mean?” We need a postal officer in Japan as quickly as you can get there. This is in 1951 during the Korean War.

KS: Now, what does that mean, “Your card has dropped?”

WP: That’s what I asked. I said, “What do you mean?” Well, back then we had the IBM cards, you know, with the punch cards. So, they ran their cards through to find a postal officer. I was a postal officer, because I had worked in the fleet post office in World War II. And they’re not but about a dozen of – twelve, fifteen, twenty, maybe – Navy postal officers in the whole world on active duty. So, one of them was getting out. He had his time, and they had to replace him with a postal officer in the Sasebo, Japan. He said, “I need to get you in Japan as quickly as you can.” Well, I was married but no children. He did give me sixty days leave to get there. So, I did flyovers.

KS: Weren’t you discharged?

WP: Well, I hadn’t completed enough time. They had educated me. They gave me an education. And I’d served about nine months after my education, and I was

released from active duty. Now, I was not discharged. But I was still too young to resign my commission. I had not fulfilled my duties. I was completely inactive. I didn't answer letters. I didn't go to drills or anything. But I was in the Navy Reserve automatically because I could not resign.

KS: They knew where you lived!

WP: They knew. Well, he found my – he called the office to tell me my name had dropped, my card had dropped.

KS: Did you even know that could happen?

WP: I had no idea. And I didn't know that I had had a classification as a postal officer, although that's all I had done on active duty. But it was interesting. My command was afloat. But I was on shore – the fleet post office. But because my command was afloat, I couldn't bring my wife out there. So, I had a whole year in the Sasebo, Japan, serving the 7th Fleet operating around Korea. You want to hear all about that?

KS: Yes!

WP: OK. Well, the 7th Fleet – the fighting ships, the battleships, the cruisers, destroyers, rocket ships, everything – they would steam up and down both the East and West Coast of North Korea just lobbing shells over them, onto land, all day, all night trying to knock out the North Koreans. Well, the Navy fighting ships would stay on station. I mean they would stay out there weeks. I mean three or four, five weeks at a time. They were replenished with fuel, oil, food, and ammunition with replenishment ships coming out of Sasebo, Japan, where I was. So, to get mail to these ships, I would load mail onto, say, a tanker. And as the two ships were sailing side-by-side with a hose transferring fuel from the tanker to the destroyer, say, we would send mail across on a highline, on pulleys going across, hundreds of bags of mail going across as they were steaming like this. So, that was my job was to get mail to the ships fighting out on the line. And, of course, they were – now back then they didn't have e-mail. They didn't have cell phones. The only communication was snail mail. So it was most important. But that was my job. And we would have either a tanker, or a refrigerator ship, or an ammunition ship going out of harbor two to three times a week. And I knew which ships – I was told which ships they were going to replenish. So, I would put mail on that replenishment, on that tanker, because they were going to those ships to replenish them.

KS: So, what year was this?

WP: This was in '51 and '52.

KS: In Japan. So, how was post-war – it was still post-War Japan.

WP: Oh, yes.

KS: What was that like?

WP: I worked very closely with the Japanese. Sasebo did not have an airfield. All of our mail came on train. It came in from Yokohama, Tokyo, that area. Took twenty-eight hours for the train to come down to Sasebo. But I worked very closely – the train station – the Japanese people, we'd have to spot trains. I'll get to more of that in just a minute. And, of course, making liberty in the town.

KS: How was that?

WP: It was very good. But we had everything we needed right there on the base. But we would send – the train would come in twice a day. Go down to the train station and load from the railcars into our trucks and come back to the post office. And, then, prepare to get ready to put on the replenishment ship going out two or three days hence.

KS: Was it strange having just fought the Japanese in one war and, then, being back?

WP: A little bit. I didn't really think about it, because they were very cooperative. It was – most of them spoke English. I mean it was – I had one man on my staff, he was a senior enlisted man. He spoke Japanese. He was American, but he had learned enough Japanese. So, he was my translator when I had to. But most of them spoke English. One time – well, it was in December of '51 – we got a radio message that they were loading thirteen freight cars of parcel post December 1st coming to us for the ships operating around Korea. Now, their freight cars are only about a third as big as our freight cars, so it's not that big. But there were thirteen freight cars of parcel post headed our way. We expected them in two or three days and, good, we'd get the mail out before Christmas. Well, we waited and waited and kept checking. That freight train got shunted aside all the way down. The freight train didn't get to Sasebo until Christmas Eve. We spotted it, talking to the engineer, train people, station. We spotted it down on a pier. They had railroad tracks running out to the pier. We had a tanker going out the next morning. So, we worked – we had about thirty men in the post office, all of us. We worked all night long unloading those thirteen freight cars. And we had a small boat over on one side of the pier. So any mail going to those ships that the tanker was going to went into the small boat. Others went into a truck to go over to a warehouse. But we worked all night that Christmas Eve getting parcel posts out to the ships on the line, the fighting ships.

KS: So, they all got their packages by Christmas?

WP: Well, they got it two or three days after Christmas.

KS: Pretty close.

WP: Pretty close. But with Navy mail – now, again, there’s no e-mail, there’s no cell phone. Mail is the most important thing back in World War II and the Korean War. We think – I talk to some old people, older people, in Navy mail during World War II. We believe that no ship ever pulled into port that there wasn’t some of her mail waiting for her. She would be at sea for two or three – oh, week or ten days, twenty days, maybe – going from port A to port B. But we knew in advance where her destination was. So, we would have mail waiting for them. Even if she was diverted at sea from going to this port to go to another port, we would be able to get some of the mail to the port where she was going. I’ll come back to that in just a minute, too. But we believe that throughout World War II and the Korean War, no ship ever pulled into port that some of her – at least some, if not all – of her mail was waiting for her. And when a ship pulls into port, they drop anchor. They don’t usually get up to the port man, but they drop anchor. And the first boat to go ashore – it’s not the captain. It’s the mailman. They – [Laughs] they did – [emotional] but the mail was most important.

KS: Sure, I can imagine that.

WP: But when they drop anchor, that small boat was over in the side immediately.

KS: That’s something I just don’t – you just don’t think about as much. But I know one of my favorite things to do when we go down to take my son down to Wilmington for the battleship –

WP: Oh, yes, the North Carolina.

KS: – is to go to the mail area. They have a little –

WP: Yeah, a little post office.

KS: And to see that.

WP: Every ship had its post office.

KS: You know, it kinds of give you a real idea of what something like that would have looked like. You know, just a visual of what it would have looked like.

WP: And the mailman – and he was a part-time mailman on smaller ships – but he was literally the first man to go ashore to pick up the mail.

KS: That’s just amazing. It makes sense, and that’s certainly the lifeline to the States and the families and – that was the lifeline, you know?

WP: That’s right.

KS: I mean it's the only way. It's just amazing. My great uncle was in the Navy in World War II.

WP: Oh, is that right?

KS: And the funny thing is he was a mailman. He worked for the post office back home, but he didn't work for the mail when he was in the Navy [Laughs]. I don't know. They must not have – he must not have put that on his sheet.

WP: I spent one year in Sasebo, Japan, doing that, putting the mail on replenishment ships. That was it, a year. Then I got transferred back to Pearl Harbor. And I was assistant – assistant post officer for the whole blankety-blank Pacific. My job was to know operations of every ship in the fleet in the Pacific months in advance. And at World War II we had maybe 600 ships in the Pacific. During the Korean War we probably had 200 to 300 ships in the Pacific. But my job, personally, my job was to know operations, where every ship was going to be, its destination, how long it was going to be there. And I was the one that told fleet post office San Francisco where to send the mail for each and every ship in the Pacific Ocean.

KS: So, you knew where all – you had a lot of security – secure information.

WP: I did. I did. I knew months in advance operations of every ship in the Pacific.

KS: Did they ever talk to you about that? I mean I'm sure they must have given you a major background check –

WP: Oh, yeah.

KS: – for knowing information like that.

WP: I was cleared for secret information. Oh, yeah, I had to be. And I won't tell any of it. I can't.

KS: That's just amazing.

WP: But I would – me, personally. Oh, every ship at noon of every day, every ship had to file a Movement Report, MR, where they were, and where their destination was. So, I read those dispatches every single day of every single ship.

KS: Now those Pearl Harbor years, was that when you went back into – is that when you went back in, or is that the initial World War II?

WP: Now, this is the Korean War.

KS: That was then, too?

WP: Yes.

KS: So, you went to Japan, back to Pearl Harbor?

WP: Yes. This was in '52 and '53.

KS: So, what did Pearl Harbor look like back then? I mean had they – you see now they have some of the *Arizona* is now a museum.

WP: Yes.

KS: What did it look like?

WP: Well, to get there I got transferred to Pearl. But I flew all the way home on Navy and civilian planes. Got my wife and the car. We drove to San Francisco, put the car on the ship, and my wife went over with me.

KS: Oh, good.

WP: We had our car. We lived off base. She was a housewife. Oh, she enrolled in the University of Hawaii. She took some courses at the University of Hawaii. But it was just civilian life really. I'd go to the office 8:30 in the morning, come home 5 o'clock in the evening. But it was seven days a week.

KS: Seven days a week?

WP: Oh, yes. Because ships were moving. I had to read – noon every – see, in the military Sunday is, oh, yeah, you take off and have church service, but you're still fighting a war. So, at noon, every ship filed its Movement Report. I had to go in and read and see where the ships were, if they were still going to where they were supposed to, or if they had been diverted.

KS: Wow. But it still must have been nice to be a couple again in Hawaii.

WP: It was. We had an apartment off base in a little complex and had our car. No children. So, it was – for a whole year.

KS: That's pretty nice.

WP: Yes, that was nice.

KS: I mean it could have been in a worse place, huh?

WP: But I couldn't get her in Japan because my command was afloat. But here my command was ashore, and so I could.

KS: Now, I know that was a beautiful time to be in Hawaii. It wasn't as overdeveloped as it may be now?

WP: No, no, that's right. Waikiki was still just a beach with one big hotel, Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Going back to in Korea – in Japan, one interesting episode. The 7th Fleet commander was a two-star admiral. Now, at this time I was Lieutenant JG [Lieutenant Junior Grade], but running the fleet post office in Sasebo. Well, the admiral, two-star admiral, his command was on board a battleship. I think it was the *Iowa* or the *Wisconsin*, one of those new battleships. Well, he pulled into port with – a battleship always travels with escorts, two or three destroyers just escorting. Well, the battleship anchored in Sasebo Harbor. And first of all, Sasebo Harbor is a huge harbor. Not unlike Hampton Roads, Norfolk, all that area up there, Newport News. So, it's a huge harbor. So, the battleship anchored two or three miles out in our harbor and dropped anchor. And he was in port for about three or four days.

The day before they were to leave a blinker message came in for the admiral from the staff saying that the battleship was going to visit the following ships the next two or three days, put mail for those ships on one of the destroyers that was in the inner harbor – it was tied up at a destroyer tender being serviced, repaired – put mail on board that destroyer for the ships they were going to visit next three or four days. Well, I was in charge. It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. So, now, I know how small a destroyer is. So, I got my boat that was assigned to me and went out to the destroyer. The captain was ashore, but I talked to the exec, and I said, "If I put 300 or 400 bags of mail on board you, where are you going to store it?" He said, "I can only put it top side on the deck up on the fo'c's'le [forecastle]." I said, "Can you keep it dry?" "No." No, a destroyer is in water all the time. I said, "OK. I refuse to put mail on you, because you can't keep it dry." Now an aside, any time postal regulations and Navy regulations were in conflict, postal regulations ruled.

KS: Really? [Laughs]

WP: So, I said, "I refuse to put mail on you." He said, "Thank you." I went back to shore and went to the barracks. And about 10 or 11 o'clock, the admiral came back. He had been on shore leave. He came back on board of his battleship and learned that this – now this two-star admiral learned that this Lieutenant JG had refused his order. And the blinker started flying back and forth – the battleship to the base – back and forth. Finally, about 4 AM the message came in, blinker, "Bring the mail out to me." Out to the battleship. So, I had the men – they were about, I'd say, ten ships that he was going to be visiting. I said, "Get fifteen bags for each of the ten" – that's 150 bags of mail. "Get fifteen bags for each of those ten ships. Put it in the small boat and race out there to the battleship." So, one of the mailmen went with the mail out there. Time he got there they were already

weighed anchor. They were sailing at 6 AM with the tide. So, they had already weighed anchor. They were beginning to move already through the submarine nets. And the small boat tied up at the gangway. The admiral had routed out the entire Marine detachment on board. They marched down the gangway. Picked up sacks of mail up and down all the time going out to open ocean.

KS: I can't imagine how they even did that, how they got it steady enough to do that.

WP: Oh, yeah. Well, a battleship is pretty steady. It's steady. But as a Lieutenant JG I defied a two-star admiral.

KS: And lived to tell about it!

WP: And lived to tell about it! But I could not risk getting the mail – and mailbags, they're sturdy. They're canvas. But they're not waterproof.

KS: Sure.

WP: So, we had to protect the mail.

KS: Well, that shows how good you were. I mean you were trustworthy, and you knew what you were doing.

WP: Had to keep the mail moving. No, it was a very interesting year or two years really.

KS: Now, you were married by the time you were in Hawaii. But we skipped over meeting your wife.

WP: Oh, well. After I got out of World War II, oh, that's one of your questions here. What did I do after I got out of the military? My dad knew the president of Home Federal Savings and Loan. And I had just gotten out. He said, "Go down and see if he's got a job." So, I went, and he hired me. And I started – well, getting ahead of myself. This is in downtown Greensboro. And lunchtime after I'd eaten my lunch I'd stand on Jefferson Square just sunning. This was in August. And one of – a girlfriend – a girl that I knew, was standing talking to me. And I knew her family, two or three brothers and such. And another blonde came walking by and said, "Hi, Betty." "Hi, Peggy." And said, "Come here. I want you to meet somebody." So, this mutual friend introduced us on Jefferson Square. And it took off from there. But that's where I met her.

KS: How long were you in Greensboro before you went to Hawaii?

WP: Oh, this was in '46 that I met my wife. And I went to Japan in '51. We went to Hawaii in '52.

KS: And, so, her name is Peggy?

WP: No, that was a common –

KS: It was Betty.

WP: My wife is Betty.

KS: OK. Great. Well, that's romantic.

WP: Oh, yeah.

KS: So, after – so, you were in Hawaii for a year?

WP: Yes.

KS: And so y'all decided to settle in Greensboro?

WP: That's right. We'd actually – we had bought a house a month before I was recalled to active duty.

KS: Isn't that the way it always goes?

WP: Yes. Literally, maybe six weeks, a month to six weeks before I was recalled. So, and she couldn't go with me. So, she stayed here and continued – she was a teacher, teaching English. She didn't want to move into the house. So, we rented the house. And she moved into an apartment until we got back. And, then, we moved back into our house.

KS: Did you go back to work at the same place?

WP: Went right back to the same place.

KS: And that was?

WP: Home Federal Savings and Loan. And I was in the savings and loan business a total of thirty-five years.

KS: Really?

WP: And you asked about my business there. I started as a teller. I knew nothing. So, the boss started me as a teller. I moved up, worked in the bookkeeping department, worked in the mortgage loan department. Kept on moving up. And, eventually, well I transfer – I left Home Federal and went to Winston-Salem Savings and Loan for fifteen years. And, again, mortgage officer, liquidity manager. Eventually, I became president of Winston-Salem Savings and Loan.

KS: So, did y'all move to Winston during that time?

WP: Yes, we lived in Winston about fifteen years. Lived in Buena Vista.

KS: Sure, I live in Winston. I know exactly where that is.

WP: We lived on Westview Drive.

KS: Sure.

WP: We built a house on Westview Drive, North Westview Drive, between, oh, Forest Drive and Reynolds Drive.

KS: I know exactly where that is. That's a beautiful area.

WP: We built that house in there. But – where did I leave off at?

KS: So, you went from teller, to a bookkeeper, to a –

WP: Mortgage loan officer. And, then, eventually at Winston-Salem Savings I was president. Then my two companies, Home Federal and Winston-Salem, merged. So, I was back at Home Federal but City Exec in Winston-Salem for Home Federal.

KS: Oh, OK.

WP: So, I was back.

KS: Isn't that funny?

WP: It is.

KS: That is wonderful. Now, did you have your children in Winston, or in Greensboro?

WP: I had them in Greensboro. They were born and raised in Greensboro. By the time junior high and senior high, there were in Winston-Salem.

KS: They went to Reynolds?

WP: Yep, both of them went to Reynolds. Both of them went to – what was the junior high right there behind Reynolds.

KS: Oh, sure. Oh, I can't think of it either.

WP: I can't either.

KS: I know where you're talking about, though.

WP: But it's right – it's right behind Reynolds High School, the junior high.

KS: Those are great schools.

WP: Wiley.

KS: Wiley Junior High, sure.

WP: That's where they went.

KS: So, you had a lot of years in Winston, too?

WP: Fifteen years in Winston and, then, got good sense and moved back to Greensboro.

KS: So, what kind of things were you involved in during that time in Winston and Greensboro and–?

WP: Just work really. Moving up the ladder of – nothing – well, in Greensboro in 1955, I opened the very first branch, savings and loan branch, in Greensboro. It was only the second savings and loan branch in the entire state. One had opened in Raleigh earlier. But this was the second one in the state. So, this was in '55. So, I spent, oh, the next twelve to fifteen years in branch offices until I left Home Federal and went and joined Winston-Salem Savings.

KS: So, what do you remember about Greensboro during that time? I know a lot of people talk about the Christmas parades. Did you take your children down to the parade?

WP: About once.

KS: Oh, really, that was enough?

WP: That was enough.

KS: How was Greensboro back then? I know it was, of course, quite a bit smaller.

WP: Very much smaller. The street I was born on, at the time it was a dirt street. This was on Tremont Drive in Sunset Hills. It was dirt. They paved it shortly after that. But I don't even – maybe the city limits was out there, and maybe not. I don't remember whether it was or not. But it was gradually growing. Just a good town

to grow up in. I had my bike. At ten years old got my bicycle, and I ranged all over Western Greensboro.

KS: Now, was it different by the time you had children here. Was that kind of feeling different?

WP: Not much.

KS: Did you let your children take off?

WP: Sure. They did.

KS: The same type of atmosphere?

WP: Yes. Back then this was in the '50s – '60s. Yes, it was okay for them to go wherever they wanted to then.

KS: Still a nice, safe town.

WP: Yes, it was.

KS: You were pretty much working at that time. Were you involved in the civic arena at all at that time, or was your wife?

WP: I was – well, as a teenager I was in Boy Scouts.

KS: Oh, OK.

WP: I eventually got to be an Eagle Scout. So, I'm still an Eagle Scout. But I got involved in the adult Scout work and continued in Greensboro and over in Winston-Salem. I kept moving up the ladder in the volunteer adult Scout work for boys. So, Scouting, I guess, was the biggest thing.

KS: Did you have boys? Were they in–

WP: No, two girls.

KS: Two girls, of course.

WP: Two girls.

KS: Here you've done all this Scouting, and you have the girls. [Laughs]

WP: But they were both involved in Scouts

KS: In Scouting too?

WP: Girl Scouts, yes.

KS: And what is it – Old Hickory? I can't remember Winston-Salem, that area.

WP: It used to be – yes. I believe it still is Old Hickory. And they – Old Hickory that was eight counties in the northwest corner, and it went up to the camp up beyond Mount Airy.

KS: Raven Knob?

WP: Raven Knob.

KS: It's a nice camp.

WP: Yes. The camp here in Greensboro – as a boy – was Camp Greystone, and then, later, Camp Wanasa out near Brown Summit. Now, the camp is down near Asheboro. Oh, back to Rotary. When I was in Boy Scouts at Camp Greystone, now this would have been in the early '40 – late '30s, early '40s – Camp Greystone, there was Rotary Row. There were five cabins that the Rotary Club had built for the Boy Scouts. And this was called Rotary Row at Camp Greystone down near Sumner, beyond Sumner.

KS: So, that was a foreshadowing of things to come?

WP: Maybe. A little bit more about ancient Rotary. I had a chance to go back and look at the old files back during the Depression. During the Depression the Rotary Club, in order to assist members of the Rotary Club, had a loan fund. And as Rotarians needed to borrow money for this, that, and the other, the Rotary Club would lend money. And they kept the books. And that book is still in the archives.

KS: Really?

WP: During the Depression the Rotary Club would lend money to members and then get repaid. I don't know whether they got interest on it or not, whatever.

KS: That's great. Now, when you say "the archives," does the Rotary have its own archives where it keeps things like that?

WP: The last I knew of them fifteen or twenty years ago, they were in the hands of Jim Rucker, R-u-c-k-e-r warehouse. He had a warehouse, and there were two or three file cabinets and boxes of old Rotary Records. And I forgot the name of his warehouse.

KS: Well, that's amazing that they were actually able to lend money.

WP: Where was I before that?

KS: We were talking about the Boy Scouts.

WP: Oh, Boy Scouts.

KS: Involvement in the Boy Scouts. I know they have Camp Hanes and another big summer camp, too.

WP: Camp Greystone. Oh, I remember now. Talking about Rotary Row. Rotary built five cabins. I'm going to guess sometime in the '20s that they built the cabins. But in the '30s, it was known as Rotary Row. I stayed in one of the cabins one of the summers. But they later gave up Camp Greystone, sold it to the Girl Scouts and moved to up near Brown Summit, Camp Wanasa. And, again, the Rotary Club built, paid for, a complex of Adirondack Shacks all around a central place. So, Rotary was involved very much in Boy Scouts, built the five cabins at Camp Greystone. And, then, the Adirondack Shacks at Camp Wanasa.

KS: So, you had heard about the Rotary even as a young man?

WP: Well, my dad joined the Rotary in Greensboro in 1921 when he came to town. Incidentally, he joined at the same time as Arnold Schiffman, Schiffman Jewelry.

KS: Sure.

WP: So, Arnold Schiffman and my dad joined Greensboro Rotary in 1921 on the same day.

KS: And what was – I'm not sure that we talked about your father. What was your father's name?

WP: Charlie Phillips, Charles.

KS: Charles.

WP: Charles W. Phillips. For Rotary he was, of course, president of the Rotary Club. He became a district governor in 1932-33 when the district was the entire state. He traveled the whole state for the Rotary Club. Later in the '60s he became second time district governor, which is unheard of normally, but twice a district governor. In 1982-83, I was a district governor. But my dad was Rotarian from 1921 until he died really. So, that was my connection to Rotary. He was the secretary of the Rotary Club – and that was the Executive Secretary, really – for the Greensboro Rotary for thirty-three years. My dad was not much of a bookkeeper. He was good administrator but not a bookkeeper. So, in about 1947, I'd come back from the Navy, World War II, and I was working at the savings and loans bookkeeping. He asked me to take over keeping the books for the

Rotary Club. So, in 1947 I started keeping all the books, sending out bills, doing all the finances, for the Rotary Club. Ten years later my boss, he was a Rotarian, took me in as his additional active into Rotary. So, in 1957 I joined the Greensboro Rotary Club. But I was still doing all the books. I was still keeping all the accounts. Just an aside: Sometime in the '50s, I can't give you a date, we had some trouble with two Rotarians. They were delinquent on paying their bills. And I'm not going to tell you their names. But it was like pulling out teeth to get them to pay their bills.

KS: That must be awkward to be in a club – and seeing these people but know they owe money.

WP: That's right. But, again, my dad was the executive secretary. It was his job to go after them. But it was my job to report to him.

KS: Oh, that's awkward.

WP: OK. That's enough of that.

KS: So, I just want to make sure I know that for the Rotary, you kept the books, and you actually joined. And what were the things that you've done in Rotary over the years?

WP: Well, I was on the board for one three-year term. Eventually, we moved to Winston-Salem. We moved to Winston-Salem in 1967. I joined the Rotary Club over there. And rose through the ranks. I was secretary there. Eventually, became president of the Winston-Salem Rotary Club and was elected there to district governor of '82 - '83. When they got – in '81, actually, we came back to Greensboro, and rejoined Greensboro Rotary Club. And I took the job as secretary for the Greensboro Rotary Club, and I held it for sixteen years. We had an Executive Secretary, but I was her boss, I would say. I still handled the books and knew what was going on.

KS: After all those years?

WP: That's right. For sixteen years I was secretary of the Greensboro Rotary Club. And, then, I finally stepped down of that. I'd had enough of it.

KS: You'd done that for decades.

WP: But in 2007, I'd been a Rotarian for fifty years: 1957 - '07. So, I said, "It's time to step down." So, I wrote a letter of resignation. And the board wouldn't let me resign.

KS: What did you do?

WP: They made me honorary Rotarian.

KS: Isn't that nice!

WP: It is. So, I'm still a Rotarian. But I don't have to attend meetings. I know when interesting programs are coming along, so I go. And I attend when I want to.

KS: It's just a lovely group of people.

WP: Oh, it is.

KS: I mean I just – I've been so lucky to do this project. Really amazing people.

WP: All the old people I know very well. The new ones I don't even know their names. They're all faces.

KS: Well, that's nice to be able to pick and choose when you go.

WP: Oh, yeah.

KS: So, you've been a Rotary member, and then a member – active in the Boy Scouts. Anything else? Are you involved in politics?

WP: Not so much. Well, when I was in the savings and loans in Winston-Salem I was active in the state organization, and for a couple of years I was the legislative chairman of the legislative committee for the state savings and loans. So, I was an unpaid lobbyist down in Raleigh. And I had to make presentations to the senate panels, and this and that two or three times, won't go into what the issues were. But I had to represent the savings and loan industry before senate and house panels in Raleigh.

KS: Did you enjoy that?

WP: Oh, yes.

KS: Was that kind of fun?

WP: Very much, very much. But at the same time my dad was in the legislature. So, that helped. When he retired from WC he ran for the legislature for House of Representatives. The first year he campaigned hard and had good funds and whatever. He led the ticket, because he knew everybody. He was public relations, Mr. Charlie. It was told to me that way back in the '30s at some time, somebody in California wrote a postcard, put his picture on it, and just said, "North Carolina." And it was delivered.

KS: That is amazing.

WP: It is.

KS: I mean. Well, he had done about everything.

WP: He had. Well, where was I? Oh, he was in the – after he retired from WC, he joined – campaigned and was elected the first year. The second term he didn't even campaign. Again, led the ticket. Six terms, twelve years.

KS: Six terms!

WP: Six terms in the House down in Raleigh. So, for twelve years he was down at Raleigh. So, when I was doing my lobbying, I used his office as headquarters. I had a good name for the senators to listen to.

KS: Sure.

WP: Maybe that's why they appointed me on the legislative committee. I don't know.

KS: I bet so. That is great.

WP: Now, my brother he got – have you interviewed him, Charlie, Jr.?

KS: No.

WP: He was on the city council here on Greensboro for two or three terms. He's a Rotarian, too.

KS: No, I haven't. Now, Hermann may have. He did a couple before I came on board.

WP: OK.

KS: I'll have to ask him.

WP: OK.

KS: We'll definitely do that. So, since you've lived in Greensboro, what events that have happened have maybe stood out in your mind? I know at some point they had some racial unrest.

WP: We were in Winston-Salem during that era.

KS: Were you?

WP: Yes, most of it. My biggest beef, I guess, with Greensboro is when we went from city council at large from all over the city, went to the ward system or district

system. Back when the city council was all at-large, the city council was made up of the leaders of the city. Yeah, they all lived in Irving Park. So what? Their interest was for the betterment of the entire city. With the districts, wards, each councilman is most responsible or interested in “What can I do for my district?” They are not so much looking at the overall welfare of the entire city. For instance, Caesar Cone. Now, this is hearsay, but I believe it’s true. You know, Cone Mills, he was one of the brothers or anyway, Caesar Cone. At this particular point, I don’t even remember a date, but he was head of the – well, maybe you know this. Every eight years – well, in Forsyth it’s every four years. But in Guilford it’s every eight years: re-evaluation of the real estate for taxes, tax values.

KS: Oh, sure.

WP: So, every eight years in Guilford County they reappraise all real estate and put a tax value on it. Well, every time this happens everybody objects and says, “No, you’ve got the value too high. Going to raise my taxes. My value isn’t that much. Bring it down.” So, you can appear before the commission and petition to have your value removed – reduced. Caesar Cone was head of this commission. So, every time someone would come and sit there and make their plea, “You appraised my house too high. It’s too much.” He would pull out his checkbook and say, “I’m prepared to write a check for that tax value right now and buy your house.” “Oh, no, no. I don’t want to sell it.” And he would back them down every time. Caesar Cone personally. And I think Caesar was a Rotarian. Herman was Rotarian, Herman Cone. I knew Herman, Sr., and Herman, Jr., just died about a month ago. And Alan Cone was a classmate of mine.

KS: Oh, really. I’ve interviewed Mr. Cone, Alan Cone.

WP: He was down at ROTC, the same as I was.

KS: Really?

WP: We were in ROTC together.

KS: That is – y’all ended up in the same Rotary.

WP: And Bynum Hunter.

KS: Sure.

WP: Well, he was down there. He and I were all – he and Alan and I. Who else? Some of us here from Greensboro were all down in Chapel Hill at ROTC.

KS: It’s a small world.

WP: It is.

KS: So, we talked before about having any connections with local colleges or universities. And you had mentioned that your father, of course, had been at WC for years.

WP: For thirty-three or thirty-four years, yes.

KS: So, do you still have additional connections beyond that?

WP: My wife was a graduate of WC, my sister, wife, of course, my mother in 1921. But my sister, sister-in-law, my wife, my daughter. I got a daughter who got a Master's over there three or four years ago. But that daughter went to Meredith, and the other daughter went to Chapel Hill. So, two daughters, one got a Master's about three or four years ago. My son-in-law is getting his Master's over there right now.

KS: So, y'all have generations of connections with what is now UNCG.

WP: That one daughter is, I told you, in the development office in the basement of the Faculty Center. But her husband is in the Master's program for library science.

KS: Oh, really?

WP: Yes.

KS: I just graduated in that program.

WP: Really?

KS: Yes. What is his name?

WP: Andrew Fair, F-a-i-r.

KS: I'll have to look him up.

WP: OK. He's mostly taken night classes.

KS: That's a good part of that. You can do that and work, too.

WP: But Andrew Fair is enrolled now.

KS: So, did your father remain connected to the college once he kind of got out and moved on?

WP: Well, when they tore this building down he moved over into Foust, the main building.

KS: Sure.

WP: For about ten years. While he was in the legislature they gave him an office over in Curry Building, way back on the second – the top floor back in the back corner. He had an office. They gave him an office. No secretary. But he had an office and telephone way back up there until they moved to the Methodist Home, Retirement Home in Charlotte about 1977, I think, is when they moved to Charlotte.

KS: But he always had an office there?

WP: Oh, yes.

KS: What an honor. That's great. Then, your wife went there. Do y'all still – are y'all still involved in any way?

WP: Very much. I was over there for the – my daughter bought seasons tickets to basketball, so.

KS: Oh!

WP: She took me to the Clemson game. No, it wasn't – yeah, it was Clemson. I believe it was Clemson. Beat the socks off of us, of course. I got a t-shirt, Spartans. I have a Spartans t-shirt.

KS: You got your Spartans t-shirt!

WP: Yes, sure.

KS: Well, we had talked a little bit about how Greensboro has changed since you lived here.

WP: It's just grown. It grew like Topsy.

KS: You think it's changed in other words?

WP: The big problem with Greensboro: The two banks, Security Bank and Guilford Bank merged, and, then, they went to Charlotte and became ultimately Bank of America. So, Greensboro lost – well, it started in Greensboro. The two banks here in Greensboro formed in merger first. And then they moved to Charlotte. Of course, Cone Mills is out – been sold. Burlington Industry is, I think, same company owns Burlington Industry and Cone Mills. Lorillard is still here. Of course, Reynolds is over in Winston-Salem. But we've lost so many headquarters that could have come here.

KS: And Wachovia, you know, the same thing happened. Wachovia's moved, too.

WP: Sold out to First Union. I know. I know. And now Wells Fargo, yes.

KS: So, what do you think are perhaps some of the biggest problems facing Greensboro at this point? How do you think they may be resolved?

WP: Well, you had on there – water. I think the water has been resolved. I think the – both the county commissioners and the city council are always at odds with each other, I mean the members of the commission, county commissioners and city council. They don't seem to cooperate. They're not looking at the big picture, what's good for the city. And that's my biggest complaint. And that's holding us back, I think, in a lot of ways.

KS: Now, what I'd like to ask that I realized after I did my first few interviews that everybody was – had done a lot of things after they had retired. They were very interested in hobbies and travel or whatever they were doing. So, I started asking about that, too, because that's really a current interest. So, since you've retired, what do you enjoy doing? Do you travel much?

WP: Not that much.

KS: You've got children, I guess, you're still visiting?

WP: Just the two daughters and one grandson.

KS: One grandson.

WP: That's it. He's down at Elon – Elon University now. I told you I started working in '46. I retired in 1981, thirty-five years in the savings and loans business. It was the few years – I saw the handwriting on the wall. Just a few years later they all folded. And I won't go into that economics with you. But in 1981 I was what – only fifty-five years old. So, I couldn't stop working. I started teaching – I had a real estate license. I had gotten it just to have it. I'd never practiced real estate. But I had a real estate broker's license. So after retirement, I started talking to one of the supervisors of real estate at Guilford Tech [Guilford Technical Community College]. I said, "Would you need an instructor?" "Yeah." So, I started teaching real estate finance. I do that out of my back pocket. So, I started teaching at Guilford Tech in '82 – '81 or '82 – real estate finance. I branched out into real estate fundamentals and into real estate law. I couldn't teach real estate brokerage, because I wasn't an active broker. But for the next twenty-some odd years I taught real estate courses, pre-licensing courses, and the continuing education courses at Guilford Tech, at Alamance Tech, at Randolph Tech, and at the private real estate school here in Greensboro, Dan Moore Real Estate. So, four different locales I was teaching real estate courses for twenty-odd years.

KS: So, you had another whole other career?

WP: Essentially. And some real estate lady, ladies mostly, they had trouble with real estate math.

KS: You're the math guy!

WP: I was math. So, I would tutor as a sideline one, or two, or three students at a time. And I have to tell a bad story about women.

KS: Oh, dear, here it comes! [Laughs]

WP: In teaching real estate math, I would have them a couple of hours at a time, and I would go over two or three mathematical processes. And they would take notes, and I would give them homework on those processes and come back next week. And next week when they came back, "Did you have trouble with your homework?" Well, one young lady, I'll say thirty to thirty-five years old, "Mr. Phillips, I couldn't do number nine." "OK. Number nine." Well, they had square footage, and she had to convert square yards to square feet. "How do you convert square yards to square feet?" Well, I went to the board, and I drew a big square like this. And I'd say, "Now, this is one yard square, one yard square. How many feet are in a yard?" "I don't know." I said, "A yardstick. How many feet are in a yard?" "I don't know." She wanted to be a Real Estate agent. I went up there and said, "There are three feet in a yard." So, I drew it. I said, "Now, three, three, nine. So, three times three is nine. That's how we convert square yards to square feet."

KS: So, you taught her, and now she knows!

WP: Now she knows. Other times I'd see them doing math, multiplication. "What's seven times nine? What's four times seven?" They couldn't do it without a calculator. I said, "Put the calculator – do it in your head." "I don't know the multiplication tables."

KS: Oh. Some people are math-brained, and some people are not. I can barely make a tip at a restaurant.

WP: OK. I'll go back now. When my oldest daughter started the fourth grade she was in academically talented class, a special class. I sent her to a different school. And they started teaching her the new math. I made a deal with her. This was in fourth grade. I said, "You learn the new math and come home and teach me at nighttime, and I'll teach you the old math." So, we had a deal going. She was in the fourth grade. We kept this up for two or three months. I had a wonderful time. Then I had to be out of town for a week or so or something, and I got behind. And one time she came back when I got back. She said, "Daddy, help me on this." I said,

- “Give me the book. You go do something else. I got to catch up.” But she to this day is still very proficient in it, because I taught her the old math, not the new math.
- KS: Well, I think I was probably of the age to get caught up in that new math, too. And it was – it’s kind of ruined a generation –
- WP: I know it.
- KS: – of people. Because it was crazy. And, then, they dropped it.
- WP: I hope.
- KS: And, so, then we were kind of left – I got caught in the metric net, too, for about a year. They tried to teach that. Then they dropped that.
- WP: I wish they had gone to metric. I’ll tell you another story on that. My – one of my sons-in-law was a physics, chemistry, general science teacher out at Ragsdale High School. He’s now gone into the ministry, Methodist ministry. But for whatever reason at the beginning of the school year he had to be out of town for two days. So, I’m signed up as a substitute teacher. I still am. My wife and I are both on the substitute teacher. And we get calls occasionally. So, he wanted me to teach the first two days of the entire school year in physics. What am I going to do? So, I went in. I took a meter stick with me, not a yardstick, but a meter stick. And I took some shirt cardboard, a pair of scissors, and some masking tape. So I had one student come up and with the meter stick measure out one decimeter, ten millimeters, or one decimeter and cut a square, one decimeter or ten millimeters, ten centimeters, ten centimeter square. And sent that student back. That got the kids quiet. What’s going on? Another one come up. I cut another one. We got five of these ten centimeters or one decimeter cardboards. So, then, we put them together, and had four rounds and made a box, five-sided box. It was open at the top. And they were quiet because they didn’t know what was coming. I said, “Now, what do we have here? One liter. This is the relationship in metric going from linear, volume, to liquid measure. Now, we have inches, and we have quarts and gallons, no relationship between them. But in metric, it’s all related. One liter is one cubic decimeter or ten centimeters. All that sort of thing.”
- KS: See, if someone had explained it to me like that, I probably would have understood metric.
- WP: At that time I was one of those promoting metric. We knew all that.
- KS: It makes sense. It made sense at the time. It’s just that they didn’t stick with it.
- WP: That’s right.

KS: They taught us one year. We did metric, and then they went back. And I don't think they did it again. So, they didn't follow – there wasn't follow through.

WP: But linear, volume is all interrelated in the metric system in measures. But not in the English system.

KS: So, you taught for a long time. And do you and your wife have any hobbies? Do you like to travel?

WP: We're both active here. I'm chairman of the buildings committee.

KS: When you say "here?"

WP: At Friends Guilford [Friends Homes Guilford].

KS: Friends at Guilford Community, and it's right across from Guilford College.

WP: That's right. There are 350 residents here at Friends Guilford. And about half a mile away, Friends West [Friends Homes West] there are another 300. So, Friends, Inc., Friends, Incorporated, [Friends Homes, Inc.] has 750 residents.

KS: So, y'all have lived in an apartment here for – ?

WP: Five years.

KS: Five years.

WP: Next month in March it will be five years. And the beauty of it is they have all stages here. We're independent living now. But when we get a little bit incapacitated, we move to intermediate care. And, then, when we get really out of it, moved to skilled care, and even they have a memory care for Alzheimer's. All right here in this one complex. There are about four or five buildings all connected there. We're all just one – each stage we can go through.

KS: So, when you say, "active," are there lectures?

WP: Oh, yes. Always. I'll show you when we go out. There are things going on all the time. Have wonderful – what's the name of it? Services, social service, or something. But I work – there are two ladies in there – I work closely with them. I was chairman of the Residents Board two years ago. And I've been chairman of the buildings committee last year and a half.

KS: So, that must be interesting. So, you know all the goings on.

WP: I become the flagstaff for all complaints.

KS: I'm not sure that's good! At least you know what's going on to help take care of it.

WP: I work very closely with the administration. We can only recommend. The Residents Council is – we're volunteers. We recommend this, or recommend that. And get slapped down sometimes. For instance, when we moved here, the interior directional signs, some of them were framed. Some of them were computer-generated. Some of them were magic marker. Some of them put up on the board with – up on the wall with Scotch tape, with masking tape. It was a hodgepodge. And they were very incomplete. We have forty or fifty different entrances all the way around. So, when somebody came in, "Where do I go?" So, they were always asking residents, "How do I get to this, that, and the other?" There were no directional signs. So, this was one of my projects. So, it took me about three years.

KS: But you pushed it through?

WP: I pushed it through. Finally got them. And, so, we have pretty much universal professionally done directional signs now. I take care – I take responsibility for that.

KS: That must have been very satisfying knowing that you did that – making your home better.

WP: Yes.

KS: It's lovely. It really is. It's just beautiful. Well, is there anything else that we have forgotten to cover that you would like to talk about?

WP: I don't know anything.

KS: This has been wonderful.

WP: Let's see. Was there anything else Rotary? I was district governor '82 - '83. President Winston-Salem. I think I told you that. Oh, did someone tell you that Greensboro Rotary Club is the largest Rotary Club in the world that has 100 percent Paul Harris Fellows?

KS: Really? Now I had heard about the Paul Harris Fellows.

WP: Paul Harris Fellow – when you give \$1,000 to Rotary International to the Paul Harris Foundation, when you give \$1,000 to that foundation, you are a Paul Harris Fellow. Greensboro Club, the largest in the world, that is 100 percent Paul Harris Fellows.

KS: Why do you think that is?

WP: Well, twisting arms.

KS: Now, now! [Laughs]

WP: And many of us – I made my wife a Paul Harris Fellow – and many of our Rotarians have made their spouse. We have a lot of Lady Rotarians. So, we've made our spouses Paul Harris Fellows.

KS: Is your wife a member of the Rotary, too?

WP: No, she's – I have given \$1,000 in her name. And, of course, I have my – I'm a Paul Harris Fellow, too. But 325 members and something like that.

KS: That's impressive.

WP: It's the largest club in the world that has 100 percent Paul Harris Fellows.

KS: Now, when you go to another city, or when you go visit, do you go visit other Rotaries, or how does that work?

WP: OK. My daughter that went to Chapel Hill, she met a Morehead Scholar down there from Shrewsbury, from England. That's a private school. The Morehead Foundation goes over to England every year and recruits the top boy from four or five private schools. So in the early '70s, Andrew Fair, I just told you, he was the top boy at Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury, S-h-r-e-w-s-b-u-r-y. Shrewsbury. But he was top boy at Shrewsbury that year. So, he was a Morehead Scholar down at Chapel Hill, and that's where my second daughter met him. They fell in love, graduated on – got married on the Saturday – graduated on Sunday. Went to Charleston for a two-week honeymoon, and then he took her back to England. So, they lived in England for thirty years. Our grandson was born over there. So, we traveled over to England about every other year to visit with them. And their home was in a little suburb of Manchester, way up in Northwest England. Manchester is huge. I mean, eight million population. And North Carolina is only eight million, now nine million. But their home was just, oh, half a block from a little restaurant where the Cheadle Hulme Rotary Club met. So, every time I went over, I would always go to the Cheadle Hulme Rotary Club. Every week doing my make ups. And one of the members there said, "You got better attendance here than I have."

KS: How interesting. So, were there any consistencies about it?

WP: Oh, yeah.

KS: Were you recognized?

- WP: Good buddies. I mean every other year I'd go, we'd spend two or three weeks there, month, and I'd go to Rotary.
- KS: That is so interesting.
- WP: All over the world. Come back some more in just a minute. One year we took our – on our own – we took a train down to Southport down on the English Channel. The *QE2* [*Queen Elizabeth 2*] was in port, but we couldn't go on board. But as we were going into the hotel we got – train had taxi going up to the hotel, carrying our bags in – here came a man out of the hotel. He said, "Oh, you're a Rotarian." You always wear your pin. He and his wife just took over us. We stayed in the hotel. But for the next four or five days they took us here, there, and yonder. Went to his Rotary Club, and they took us to the museums, that we would not have been able to do at all. Wherever you go.
- KS: It's that kind of connection.
- WP: That's right. Tell you another trip we took on our own. We took a coach tour through Ireland. So, as we were going through Ireland we came to a little town, coach, bus tour, as we passed going at 4 or 5 o'clock saw a hotel with the Rotary Wheel on it in Ireland. So, we got to our hotel. So, I asked the concierge, "That hotel back there two blocks back, find out when the Rotary Club meets." He called, "Tonight." So, I walked back and I went to the Rotary Club in that little town. Don't even know what it was. It was in the restaurant of the hotel. Probably twenty-five or thirty members, small club. We were sitting at a table for four. There was a gynecologist over here, mortician over here, me, and some – I don't know what he was. And we were just visiting, talking, here, there, and yon. And I paused for a while. And one of them said, "What kind of gin do you drink?" Well, I don't drink gin, my brother does. He drinks gin all the time. I said – all I could think of was Beefeater. I'd seen that name. I said, "Well, Beefeater." "Oh, no, no, don't drink Beefeater." This is a Rotary Club. "Don't drink." "OK, I won't drink Beefeater." He said, "Drink Cork gin." "OK. I'll drink Cork gin." And that was it. But I mean we're just talking. "But don't drink Beefeater gin." Ireland Beefeater is England. "Don't drink Beefeater. Drink Cork gin." "OK, I'll drink Cork gin."
- KS: Isn't that funny being in Ireland at the Rotary Club talking about gin?
- WP: So, the next day as the bus was going along we went into Cork County. Here was a huge distillery, Cork Distillery.
- KS: I hope you brought some – brought home to your brother?
- WP: I found equivalent of an ABC store. I bought three pints. I brought it back home to my brother. I kept one. And he said, "Gin is gin." He couldn't tell any difference.

KS: But you got it from the horse's mouth what was the best!

WP: Another instance: There were two or three Rotary Clubs. There are seven now in Greensboro. But there were three of us that were going over to help Moscow establish their Rotary Club. And I was fortunate to be among the ones that went over to Moscow.

KS: Wow.

WP: There were ten of us. And we stayed in a hotel over there, worked with their president, and their board. They didn't understand parliamentary rules, Robert's Rules of Order, voting. No.

KS: Voting?

WP: Yes, Democratic voting. No, we had to teach them this. But I was in Moscow working with, training, trying to help the Moscow Rotary.

KS: And what year was that?

WP: Whoo.

KS: About?

WP: I'm going to stab it '95, maybe. Somewhere in the '90s.

KS: So, that was the first one in Russia, in Moscow?

WP: Yes, I think so. There were two or three Rotary Clubs. We went up to St. Petersburg on the train and visited there with the Rotary Club in St. Petersburg.

KS: How was Russia? Was it interesting?

WP: Very interesting. Very interesting. We were there for, I guess, ten days.

KS: That's a long time.

WP: It is. But we were being escorted. The Rotary Club took us all around. They were speaking English all the way through.

KS: Really?

WP: I read – heard this on TV about a month ago. There are more people in China in English classes than there are in the United States speaking English.

KS: That's frightening. I guess we won't learn any other language. So, they have to learn ours.

WP: That's right. It is the international language. But all airlines, airports around the world use English.

KS: Well, it's certainly nice for us.

WP: Yes, it is. But more people in China taking English courses than there are in the United States speaking English.

KS: Well, so, you got – Rotary has been – you've been so involved in the Rotary all your life.

WP: Yes, all my life. My dad.

KS: Your father. I know everybody in your family. You're a Rotary family.

WP: That's right. We are.

KS: That's wonderful. And, so, is your son-in-law in?

WP: No.

KS: You've got to recruit him.

WP: Well, he's not in business yet. He's not a joiner, though.

KS: Oh, well. Those are wonderful stories. And I think it's really admirable that you go to different places and look up the Rotary. How that's enriched your experiences!

WP: There is a directory. I mean it's three quarters of an inch thick. There – I don't know. Two or three thousand Rotary Clubs around the world. There are over one million Rotarians around the world. But there is a directory that the secretary has, and whenever I go, leave, Greensboro, I go find out where the Rotary Clubs are – where they meet, what day they meet, which hotel, whatever – wherever I'm going. And I like to go and visit other Rotarians. Another one, when we were in England our daughter, and Betty and I, used her car. She drove to the East Coast of England. We took an overnight ferry over to Denmark, and then I started driving because you drive on the right-hand side there. But I went to a Danish Rotary Club. They introduced me in English, but then they went off into German or Danish or something. I don't know what happened.

KS: But at least you got to sit in! It's great that you've taken advantage of those kinds of connections. Well, thank you so much. This has been so interesting!

WP: Well, I'm glad.

KS: I appreciate it.

WP: Did I get all the things you need?

KS: I think we hit everything. And if you think of anything else, I can come back out.

[Recorder turned off]

WP: Let's see. Was there anything else Rotary? Oh, used to when we met at the O. Henry Hotel.

KS: Oh, I love the O. Henry. Oh, the old one? The new one, or the old one?

WP: The old one.

KS: There was one originally, I know, downtown.

WP: Downtown. We met in the ballroom. We were a singing Rotary Club.

KS: What does that mean?

WP: One of our members played the piano. There's a Rotary songbook, maybe forty or fifty songs in it. And every, back then we were meeting every Monday. We meet every Wednesday now. But every Monday we would – one of our members played the piano – we'd sing a song before or after the invocation, whatever. Later on we changed to Wednesday. Moved from the O. Henry Hotel. We met at the YWCA after they tore down the O. Henry Hotel, met at the YWCA for a couple of years. I was in Winston-Salem, but I would go every now and then. And, then, we moved to the new YMCA down on West Market Street. We met there for, oh...and we stopped singing.

KS: Oh, did you vote on that?

WP: No, the pianist died.

KS: Oh.

WP: His son is a member now.

KS: Does he play?

WP: He doesn't play. But we moved to the YMCA, and we met there for four or five years. Now, moved out to the coliseum. When I was district governor – as district

governor of the Piedmont in North Carolina there are about thirty Rotary Clubs, thirty or forty Rotary Clubs – two stories on this one. District governor, you serve for a year. You visit every club in your district, and you sit with their board. You hear committee reports and comments and give advice and help. Walnut Cove is in our district. You know where Walnut Cove is, north of Winston-Salem? A little country town. They meet on Friday night, or did then. And this is back in '82, '83. Friday night they met at a restaurant. But the board would meet Friday afternoon. Board meeting once a month. So, Friday afternoon I drove to Walnut Cove. It was somebody's house. Had a big den about like this, a little bit bigger. And they had twelve to fifteen chairs in a couple of rows. And we were listening to committee reports of this committee, that committee. You could imagine hearing reports. It was kind of dull, real dull. I looked about four or five men down the row, he had pulled out a Mason jar with clear liquid in it, unscrewed the cap, took a couple of swigs, put the cap back on, and passed it to the next man. White lightning. And it was coming my way.

KS: Out of the communal Mason jar?

WP: The next guy, he unscrewed the cap, took a couple of swigs, put the cap back on. And the president was sitting next to me, and he saw my concern, the president. And it kept coming closer and closer. He whispered to me, said, "Wade, it's all right. I know who made that." So, when it got to me, it did.

KS: When in Rome!

WP: I unscrewed the cap and – it was smooth, I just wanted to take it home with me.

KS: I wonder. Was that just a usual thing that they did over there?

WP: I don't know. Now, in England when I'd go to the Rotary Club there, whether it's lunch or supper, you always go to the bar first, and you get your drink. And I take – have one or two drinks before going to your meeting, whether it's a lunch meeting or a supper meeting. The first time I went I would drink my drink and lay it aside, eat my meal, and listen to the program. At the end of the meal we would all toast the Queen. So, everybody stands up, takes a drink, and toasts the Queen. I didn't have a toast [whispering]. So, after that I learned, "Don't drink all of your drink. Save a little bit."

KS: For the Queen!

WP: For the Queen at the end of the meeting, because you always toast the Queen at the end of the meeting. You stand up and toast.

KS: I love that. Well, I guess that's sociable when you start off like that. I mean it makes it more of a social occasion.

WP: That's right.

KS: Although I'm not sure drinking at lunch I could get much done in the afternoon.

WP: So, what?

KS: [Laughs]

WP: Well, some people have a beer for lunch. I mean that is their lunch. Just social drinking.

KS: So, I guess there are similarities in the Rotaries, and then, I guess, just everyone takes off on their own traditions, too.

WP: That's right.

WP: Now, I always attended the little club there in Cheadle Hulme. But this was a suburb of Manchester, eight million population. Occasionally, I'd take – we were 30 miles out from the center city. So, sometimes I'd take the train into center city to go to the Manchester Rotary Club. They were organized about the same time the Greensboro Club was. It was all men. Rotary was now taking in women, but they were so adamant against taking in women, no, siree. That was a men's club.

KS: Does each chapter get to decide? They couldn't force – could they force them to take women in Manchester?

WP: They eventually did. They have some now. But it was a lawsuit, Los Angeles first did it. I don't have a date. I'm going to guess in the '50s some time. One of the Los Angeles Rotary Clubs took in women as members. They were ostracized. They were ousted. They canceled their charter as Rotary International said, "You are no longer a Rotary Club, because you took in women." That went on – this was – and it became – it finally went to civil lawsuit. Finally, Los Angeles prevailed and Rotary changed their rules to permit women. But LA was the one that started it.

KS: That makes sense. And, then, I guess they just came slowly as far as the international.

WP: That's right. There are probably some English clubs still that don't take women.

KS: But, I guess, you've got – in a city like Manchester how many Rotary Clubs did they have?

WP: I don't even know.

KS: I mean at least two that you know of.

WP: There were two in Cheadle Hulme. This was over thirty miles out from the center city. And I would attend one on Tuesday night and another one on Thursday night.

KS: How much fun. I bet you did get to know people.

WP: One of the members was the – ran the tourist – what do you call it? Tourist guide, travel agency. He ran the travel agency in the little town. So, he was the one that helped me travel all over England on our own, by train, by bus, or whatever.

KS: So, you knew the guy who could take information.

WP: He was a Rotarian.

KS: Wow. Well, that's nice.

WP: He got us – here's another story. A Rotarian travel agency, we wanted to go to Scotland on our own. Andrew and Kathy were both working. So, we were on our own. We just used that as headquarters. In Scotland, in Edinburgh, once a year for about two weeks, they have what's called the Tattoo. It's a huge – it's on the esplanade coming from Edinburgh Castle. They have bleachers. Must be 10,000 people facing on to this esplanade coming, big parade ground, coming out of Edinburgh Castle. They have bands from all over the world come and, for about two and a half to three hours, perform. And this is called the Tattoo. Once a year or something. The only way you get tickets is the year before, or you inherit the tickets. It's like NCAA tickets: You don't just get tickets to that. We wanted to see it. This Rotarian who had the travel agency, he was a Scotsman. He had some contacts. He got us two tickets. I don't know how.

KS: That's incredible.

WP: We were there.

KS: How was it? Was it just fabulous?

WP: Got it all on tape.

KS: Now, that is a great story.

WP: Oh, yeah.

KS: See, Rotaries just open all kinds of doors.

WP: I know it. While we were in Edinburgh we took a side trip. We went up to St. Andrews. I actually walked on old – what’s it called? The Old Course. Now, I didn’t play it. But I actually walked on it.

KS: Are you a golfer?

WP: Yes. I was. I’m not now. But, yep, I was a golfer.

KS: You’ve got to be a golfer in North Carolina, I guess, huh?

WP: And I played golf with some other – oh, another. I took a train trip over to Chester, England. Big cathedral there. Took the Rotary there. Met at the Blossom Inn Hotel. Called the Blossom Inn. Met a Rotarian there. And we went to play golf. In Chester, it’s an ancient Roman town. They have excavated a coliseum, a small coliseum, in Chester, England. It’s the Roman wall, parts of the Roman wall is still around there. Another story, my daughter married the Morehead Scholar. His father was a dairy farmer, what we would call a tenant farmer now. He had – he was on the Duke of Westminster’s land. And had a herd of 500 dairy cows, milked them twice a day, of course. He had milking stations. We were with him. But they lived in one of the houses on the Duke of Westminster’s land. Big two-story brick house, old. I mean it was built in the 1500s or something. So, old that the electricity all had – I mean exposed cord like that to get electricity. The bathroom is added on the back porch. I mean – the house was built in the 1500s. And we were staying with her in-laws on the farm there. Big house. And her sister-in-law, younger, she was twelve to fifteen years old, she said, “Wade, you want to go down to the basement.” “OK, I’ll go down in the basement.” Looked in the basement. We went down to the basement, stone-lined basement, and she said, “This is a Roman basement.” The Romans had built that – built a house there. And on this basement was a Roman basement built in the 200 or 300 AD. That house had burned down some centuries before this new house had been built on that same Roman basement.

KS: That is amazing. Well, and it must have been great for you to go through the house.

WP: Sure. Now, the house was new. It was built in 1500.

KS: Still, for us, that’s what we consider new.

WP: Yes, but it was still the same.

KS: Now, where was that?

WP: That was in Cheshire County. In Northeast England, in Cheshire.

KS: You’ve had some amazing experiences.

WP: Oh, yeah. We have. Oh, I was telling you about the Blossom Hotel, Rotary Club there. We still send postcards to that Rotarian. His wife was the mayor of town. But in Chester, the cathedral is famous there.

KS: Do you have any Rotarians from other places that visit y'all?

WP: One year when we were in Winston-Salem we were the host club for Australia, a group study exchange. So, they – four or five businessmen and one Rotarian came from Australia. We hosted him, stayed at our house for the week. For a while we corresponded with him. We never did go to Australia. He kept inviting us, but we never did.

KS: That's far.

WP: Yes.

KS: Now, I think – does the Rotary Club also – and I think I have a friend of mine whose daughter went on a Rotary exchange program, student exchange.

WP: Student exchange. Everybody knows about the Rhodes Scholarship, but the Rotary Scholarship is better. There are hundreds, thousands, of Rotary Scholarships around the world. You might have a student in Brazil going to Japan. You would have another one in Egypt going to, oh, Canada. I mean it's worldwide exchange. It's not just Americans going to other countries. You choose your country. And our district, we sponsor a scholarship every year going somewhere, and the others come here.

KS: I had not heard of it before. A friend of mine's daughter went to France and stayed with a family and went to school for a whole year.

WP: That's right.

KS: It changed her life.

WP: One year when we were had a student coming, a high school student, from France. He was cut flying into New York. We had to get him from New York to here. So, a pediatrician loaned his car. I was the Rotarian that drove, and I took two high school boys with me. One of them was Phil Weaver, who is the – he was the coach out at Page, just retired. But he was one of the teenagers that I took. Me, two teenagers, we drove to New York, stayed in the YMCA, New York. Picked up this German, maybe it was German, German or French. We took the boy, brought him back. And he spent a whole year going to Grimsley High School staying at different homes. Now, that was a high school program. But there's a college program, too. And they go on their own. It's far more valuable than the Rhodes Scholar. But the Rhodes Scholarship gets far more publicity than we do.

But the group study exchange is one Rotarian and four or five local businessmen – young businessmen or women go and spend a month in a foreign country, and you exchange and you send a team back to that country. And we've done that with Israel. We've done it with Japan, somewhere in Japan. We've done it in Australia, England, all around. We've done it – our club does.

KS: That's great.

WP: Kathelene, I hope I've –

KS: This has been wonderful. I really can't thank you enough.

WP: But if you want a book, talk to the development office.

KS: This book– I'm going to say it for the tape. The book, *Changing Assignments* by Allen Trelease, and I may have to get one of those for my very own.

WP: I'm going to have Allen autograph it and put it in our library here.

KS: Oh, that's a good idea.

WP: Have you seen our library here?

KS: No, I'd like you to just show it to me if you have a minute. Let me close down this. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed today.

WP: Yes.

KS: Thank you again.

[End of interview]