

The Back Mountain Oral History Project

**This project is jointly supported by grants from
the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and
the College Misericordia Strategic Initiative Grant Program**

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**With special thanks to Harrison Wick and the Sister Mary Carmel McGarigle Archives at
College Misericordia for support and editorial contributions.**

Oral History
Bill Wentz and Frank Wadas
Harvey's Lake Yacht Club and Transportation
October 7, 2004

Renee Lavin: Can you please state your name?

Bill: My legal name is William Wentz and you spell that W-E-N-T-Z.

Renee: Your birth date?

Bill: I was born November 25, 1925 in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. I was raised until I was 14 or 15 in Williamsport and moved over here to Wyoming Valley, living in Forty Fort where I graduated from high school in 1943. I continued on to Bucknell where I eventually got my (this was during WWII now) eventually got in the navy and I got my commission as an ensign in the navy and got my degree at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in June of 1946 that's me.

Renee: And can you please state your name and birth date?

Frank: I'm Frank Wadas and I was born in Freemont, Michigan on a sheep ranch if you will. And went to school there come out of high school, and before I was dry behind the ears went right into this WWII. That was in 1941. And I was in the service for 4 years; came out, went back to school, started my own business and now retired. How's that for a thumbnail. (laughter in background)

Renee: And when was your birth date?

Frank: That would be August 5, 1922. I tell everybody I'm 39 and I have celebrated it 43 times, but Bill was Commodore when I joined the club speaking of Harvey's Lake Yacht Club now. We had a cottage just up from the lake and although I was probably active in the Yacht Club for several years with the sailboats and everything before I joined and I have enjoyed the club a great deal. Bill has been an active member for how long?

Bill: Many years!

Frank: Yes.

Renee: Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the Yacht Club?

Frank: Somehow or another I got pushed into being the historian and I thought they said historical (short pause). So I went along and have been picking up things over the years; started to make up a history of the club. I don't know, 10 years ago something like that and it'll maybe a year before I open it up and look at something because someone else will give me a picture and I'll stick it in there and it will be another year before I look at it again. But, it started out the

history of the club basically, it started out with a bunch of dock owners they got together regularly and they would have their gatherings at different docks. The dock owners would take turns as being respective host and hostess, but their main interest was motor boat racing. Back then, this was in about 1938 or 1939, when the new highway opened up out to the lake and that's what allowed an awful lot of people to have summer residence out there, before the highway they wandered around and it took them an hour to get out here. The trolley, that was a mess because they had to change trolleys in Luzerne. How long did it take the trolley to come out here? Do you have any idea? Do you have an old schedule?

Bill: Maybe I do, let me look.

Frank: But anyway it was an inconvenience before. Once they opened the highway the new highway that was a two-lane highway and it went right straight from Luzerne to Harvey's Lake and now they could drive at pretty decent clip. So, the number of residents, summer residents went up very rapidly. The interest as I say was in motor boat racing because most of the boats at the lake at that time were in-boards, Chriscraft, Garfields, they had a few keel sail boats and what they call it Johnny boat was popular then. m, they used to do a lot of m, ice boats on the lake some of them were sail but some of them were powered by a gasoline motor and they had a big old aircraft propeller to get them around. And those things would really get going on the lake when the ice was smooth and they had a heck of a time stopping them. They had little hand breaks that dug into the ice, but they had to really pull on those things to stop it. But that's what the group did in the winter when they would go out there. In the summer it was, the motor boat racing, they used to take the windshield off the big old In-boards and they raced locally as a group, but they wanted to be associated with the American Powerboat Association. And they found out that they had to be an organized club and best to be incorporated to reduce liability. So, I think it was 1939, it was late in 1939, they got together and they elected or appointed a fellow by the name of Reese Meredith and he was acting commodore and he was the one that set up all the paperwork for the incorporation. And then in 1940, it was informally incorporated, that was early in 1940, and our first commodore was Attorney Frank Pinella, he was later the judge. And the first vice commodore was Percy Brown, and he was a well-known butcher at the time and then he went on into the restaurant business and the grocery business. And they set up the dues for 5 dollars a year so that was the start of the club and it just grew from there. I think I have it all here in pictures of the motor boat racing because in WWII all the meetings, they went on with the meetings during World War II, but the racing and the social events were pretty well stopped. And somehow or another we lost all the minutes of the meeting between '41 and '47 and '47 we began to pick, we had the minutes on record from then on, but the early ones back during the war those are all gone somewhere. And after WWII they started now there were sanction races and they used to have the big backing of the American Powerboat Association. They had people come from all over for those races and the crowds would be all around the lake watching the races, we have pictures of that in here. They broke away from having to have dock owners' membership because of the races they began to get more and more people in and then they needed more of a home base. So, 10 of the members put up \$500 a piece and they bought a piece of property from Russell Smith who had the flying school at the lake. And they bought a little piece of property there and that was their home base and again we had them paying and everybody, but the ones who contributed to that. And then it went from there to again they began

to make membership easier to get in, it went from a dock owner well then you had to own a boat, and then they got so you didn't have to own a boat, but all the board of governors had to own a boat to be on the board and then as the rules were changed they got it so motor boat racing went out, that went out in about 1959 I think?

Bill: '58.

Frank: '58-'59 was the last race and then they changed it over, they started to go to sail boat racing and then it was you to be on the board of governors you had to own a sailboat. Then they dropped that and they had it to the majority of the board of governors had to be so many sailors at a meeting. I don't know if that was actually in the by-laws, but they hung to that pretty close and even now they push to keep sailors on the board because now it's a different club. It's a combination we have sailors, we have motor boaters, we have social members that don't have a boat or have no interest in boating.

Bill: But they do have a place to swim.

Frank: They have a place to swim. For years it was called the "Best Kept Secret" in the valley because they had a place to come out there and picnic and to swim, and they had a lifeguard. They keep the membership pretty well restricted as to numbers because they don't want to get it too busy. They keep it right around 100 membership, family memberships. I think this year we have a little bit more I think about 110 family membership and we have about 20 some single members. And I counted children we have 100, we have close to 100 children that come under that family membership, which is a good thing. This is where our future members come from. So, now you talk, you talk. (Laughter)

Bill: Yes, what do you when a member's child becomes 21 and gets married and has been going up there for years and they want to become a member. You can't really tell them we have too many people; now you're over the limit. A lot of them included for 20 years we can't say I'm not adding anymore people. So it certainly grows a little bit over a 100.

Frank: I was more interested in the transportation end. I have a little bit of a video here I'm just going to show you a bit of it of an airplane taking off. Russ Smith, I understand that he used to take his plane and fly to work into Forty Fort Airport up in the lake in the summertime and land on the river down there. But I don't know that would be a long walk. (Laughter) I don't know whether I believe that or not (Laughter). He probably did it a couple of times.

Frank: But it got to be a problem landing. Our cottage was just up from the flying school a little bit and one of the things we used to laugh about we had an Irish setter. And that Irish setter would be on the dock when the plane would come in, that Irish setter would pull up to a point. I guess he thought it was a big duck. We had more pictures of that Irish setter up to a perfect point when the plane was coming in. But they got so that they had an awful time landing because of the boat traffic on the lake.

Bill: Of course I have the railroad pictures too. I'm sort of the collector of mobile history in a way. I got a lot of books on railroads, and trains, and ships, things around here. I have one boat model of the one of the steamboats of Harvey's Lake.

Frank: They just remodeled down at Luzerne lumber that base hardware. Yes there is a model in that thing.

Bill: This is the Acoma. I started this what 2-3 years ago; it took me 2-3 years to build it I guess.

Renee: Do you know Ed Roth right across the street?

Bill: Yes sure he used to live in this house.

Renee: Really that's amazing!

Frank: I was just saying didn't they just remodel Ace hardware, that big building that used to be the trolley turn, turn around?

Bill: Whereabouts?

Frank: In Luzerne.

Bill: Luzerne, I don't know. Here is the Wilkes-Barre trolley car history.

Frank: We went through that building or I was in the building one time and that was the old trolley station there.

Bill: That's what you mean by the lumber company right there.

Frank: Yes, right in the Ace Hardware.

Bill: Yes that was a step down, electrical breaker in other words they you as know (inaudible) deteriorates very fast so they sent (inaudible) out to there. And I'm sure they worked on the station over here where they knocked the alternating current and that was a substation and they had generators in there and that converted AC to DC.

Frank: They did a lot of repairs or something?

Bill: Yes they might have.

Frank: Because I was in that maybe 10 years ago, but I noticed out in front now they have a new platform. I was wondering whether they gutted the inside of that. That was an old building.

Bill: You talking about the brick building?

Frank: Yes.

Bill: They could put a trolley in there I believe.

Frank: Yes that's where the trolleys went in there.

Bill: That was basically a substation, an electrical substation and there was another one over here in this corner. I remember that when I was in high school.

Frank: Didn't they have to change now? If they took the trolley from Wilkes-Barre and picked it up on the square didn't they have to change trolleys in Luzerne to come on out here?

Bill: I don't think so. I think the trolley ran all the way from Wilkes-Barre to Harvey's Lake.

Frank: Straight on trolleys?

Bill: Because I have videos of some of these old trolley trips and there are pictures in there of the Harvey's Lake trolley. Maybe it's the Dallas trolley, I'm not sure. There is a trolley barn down here where, the gas station was across from 309.

Renee: The Sunoco gas station?

Bill: Yes, it burned down and destroyed all the old trolleys. I love the trolley book, but I couldn't find it. I kept looking for it in there, but when libraries are full, they are always short on space so they just shove books wherever they have to be. I can show you just a couple short pictures of this, but I know you have limited time.

Renee: No, take your time I have a lot of time today.

(Pause)

Bill: I converted these myself many years ago so they are not real fancy. This is Russell Smith's Seaplane taking off from the lake.

Frank: That was the first dock that the Yacht Club built. \$650 they paid Swanson to build that dock.

Bill: They did (laughter).

Frank: Today two pilings is \$650 to build.

Bill: I know. These are some early pictures. (inaudible) These are just some early pictures here. It isn't really much different here then you see today. This is the last year of the motor boat races. I was a (inaudible) I just took a couple shots I guess that's all I have of the racing. If movie film wasn't so expensive. I gave you a copy of this once did you ever check, (inaudible) but that

supposedly happened that was an old cape cod that wasn't very fast and it leaked all the time, but we had a good time with it. We had races. Boy, it really looks different here. (inaudible) Who is that? Do you remember that we used to sail with him he moved to Virginia I can't think of his name? Paul or (inaudible) James Burke.

Frank: Yes.

Bill: Then we had the fire parade for Labor Day weekend. We got all the sail boats together and we put a two by four across for stabilization and we put a rope flare at the end of it and we spent about 2 hours going around the lake and every time we came to the Grotto they shot fireworks off. They always waited until we got there.

Frank: This year they didn't have them at the Grotto.

Bill: Yes. (inaudible) We had a tradition according to Commodore (inaudible) Labor Day until the new Commodore took over. That was Bert Lauerman standing there. One day we went over to the lake over here too.

Frank: Winola or?

Bill: No. Back off 118.

Frank: Silkworth, we went over to Lake Silkworth and this is the 4th. And they celebrated the 4th of July, they decorated all the boats up like this and went around the lake. They wanted more entertainment so we came over for sailboat racing. So, we had enough boats to put them up and (inaudible) held the race. I didn't win anything, but I think Robert, he was commodore at that time and he handed out the trophies. They gave us little trophies, or something, but these pictures are taken at Lake Silkworth. There they are handing out the prizes. Here we are back at the Lake.

Frank: Do you know...

Bill: I'm getting ready for the race, I'm out in my boat taking movies. You see the hanger, it still has the Smith's Flying Service side on it. It was sometime around here when we purchased the property from Russ Smith, he couldn't fly out of here anymore and we had a clubhouse. Before that we had rented it twice a month for a meeting. When Frank talked about a secret when I joined the club there was no initiation fee the dues were I think 12-15 dollars a year and for that I had a place to park, a place to swim, a lifeguard, and free beer at every meeting. (laughter) That was every 2 weeks all summer long you couldn't beat it. That was the commodore when I took the picture that was John Burke and his wife there that's me of course I don't remember that. So I don't know whether you want to see anymore of these or not.

Frank: Who designed our burgee?

Bill: That was designed a long time ago because most yacht clubs don't use that shape.

Frank: I know, I know and now somewhere along the line...

Bill: They didn't know any better.

Frank: Somewhere along the line they said that William Woolbert's wife.

Bill: I never heard the story.

Frank: Because most burgees are just a triangle with a club, but our burgee ends in a dove tail.

Bill: Even the navy code signal they fly the (inaudible)?

Frank: I really don't remember Bill.

Bill: I don't remember either. But, I was... There is also a shot here somewhere of ice boating.

Frank: Yes, I just picked up a picture of one of the iceboats (inaudible).

Bill: This is, one of these was at Quaker Lake. These are of Quaker Lake. Quaker Lake's a small lake up near Binghamton. They have a bunch of comet class. (Inaudible)

Frank: You notice how smooth the ice is there.

Bill: We didn't use it too much because often where there is ice there is snow and no one wants to go out and shovel an acre of snow off the ice. Then they put the bubblers in and they are probably used more than they had to be used, but you can't get in the ice anymore there is water at the shore all the places.

Frank: The bubblers themselves just let little holes in, it's these new de-icers they are called with a propeller they open up so much, but the ice seemed thicker then. When we first bought our place we had a little a gasoline motor with a saw in it. We sawed the ice. I bought that from Dr. Worcski and right after that a fellow by the name of Chuck Polaski and his Doc was here and Dr. Dunn's and NR's we were the first three to have bubblers on the lake. And the first year we put those in, Chuck Polaski is the one that designed the whole thing. The first year, every Sunday we would have maybe a hundred cars stop and look at that and they wouldn't believe that these bubbles were bringing warm water up. They accused us of throwing salt and everything else in the water and they called DER come over and looked at the thing. That was the first year, the three of us and Dr. Dunn was an orthodontist and he had these old compressors, they were too slow to be used for dental work anymore and I still have that old compressor, but that is what we used.

Bill: That is a shot of me going very fast. I slowed up the movie camera a few frames per second. Well anyway that's enough of this. (inaudible) The tail end of this film is we traveled folks up to the Lake in New York State Cansinopia Lake and raced up there. We had several different classes of boat racing, in other words to have a fair race all the boats would be alike. There are

class boat has specific rules as to dimensions and length: sail area, and weight, and a whole bunch of stuff and we our biggest league was comets and we had a couple lightnings and mopjocks and then we had the little board boats. We took the comets up to New York State to race. This is the man who ran our races he was an old racer. I got a story about the Can, but we didn't use it very often because one Sunday morning a very irate man came storming in about an hour later. And he said that he worked nights instead of days and that can woke him up and he appreciated if we would stop using the can. He was much bigger (laughing) than any of us and we quit using it. But Jack Curtis was a stickler for the rules and there are such a thing as the yacht racing rules of North America listing everything about it and he enforced every one of them. We didn't like it sometimes and yacht racing is a funny thing because the people who run the race have a meeting beforehand and sometimes the same day and sometimes the day before. And when you ask them a question about the race afterwards they refuse to open their mouths to talk to you because you were supposed to listen at that meeting and pick up all the knowledge. And Frank can tell you about that.

Frank: That still goes on today at a sanctioned race on the race committee down in Florida and they have their meeting the night before and you synchronize your watch then. The next day you can pull up to that starting line or the committee boat and ask them what time it is they won't even tell you the time they won't say a word to you so that still goes on. (laughing) Back then Jack Curtis was known for his sticking to the rules and a lot of times that the protest they would get to be almost physical. They would fight, Dr. Brantese, he had a temper when it come to sailing and if you got in his way, he didn't care starboard or anything he would run right over you. (Laughter)

Renee: So you said that you were a commodore of the yacht club, when was that?

Bill: 1977 and 1978.

Renee: So what entails being a commodore?

Bill: The same thing as a president of an organization really. We are active only in the summertime really and we hold meetings, the board of directors holds meetings all year round of course and because since we own property it needs to be taken care of in the winter.

Bill: I would conduct. We had monthly meetings when I was commodore and of course we conducted the meeting, run the minutes of the last meeting, the treasurer's reports, etc. etc. and things like that. In the early days it was more fun than it is today. Because we would have someone get up and say, "I don't like that bush over there in the corner it obstructs my view I think we should take it out" and someone else would say, "No, I like the bush there." Things like this you know and one Doctor from very early, early days says "drinking is no good and I don't think beer shouldn't be allowed here at the club." He got voted out at every meeting and every meeting he brought the same proposal up. Now this is the races up at New York State. I think there were 41 boats on the starting line. I snuck in behind a guy at one of the buoys and he claimed I violated his space and he wanted to raise a foul flag. A foul flag on a boat is a square little red flag and that is all it says and it is square and red and it doesn't say how big it is he

didn't have one. So he took off his orange life jacket and started waiving it like this. To me that wasn't a foul flag so I continued on my way and he didn't speak to me the rest of the weekend because we were fighting for 35th place out of 41 boats. (laughter) I will just let this run then. These are...What else are we going to talk about? I have my train pictures here. She said he never seen those if I can find them in a hurry.

Renee: So through the 60s and 70s and 80s it was primarily sail boat racing?

Frank: Yes, because when we had a member Joan Jennings now Joan Williams. She was one of the charter members of the commodore or comet fleet and that was the first organized fleet at Harvey's Lake. I have the date in there somewhere. And she raced and still raced up to the year 2000 and this was probably in the 60s, probably 62 or 63 when that fleet was organized. But throughout the whole country sailing is way down. Everyone wants to be on a wave runner and that stuff especially the kids. But it's amazing around the water closer to the water you still see a lot of active fleets with the kids in it. We haven't been successful in getting a lot of kids interested in it. Like I said they are all interested in, I say they are all, but that is not a fair word. This year we have a senior at Dallas high who is developing into a very good sailor. In fact he won all three major awards the club has this year and we are trying to get a little publicity. I have some pictures and when I get them developed I want to get them into the Dallas Post and maybe create a little more interest in sailing. If the price of gasoline keeps going up there would be more of them interested. (laughter)

Renee: So Bill, you have an interest in transportation? Anything specific or in transportation in general because that is like my main interests as well.

Bill: I own a train and boat. I also like such things as canals. I have a lot of books. I buy books I have over the years I guess. Are you aware of Charlie Petrillo's books there? I guess I have all of those and I know Charlie and I made him a copy of that book I gave to him. This is a trip to Noxen in 1959. That particular shot was taken along the Susquehanna River south of Tunkhannock at the old girl scout camp (laughing, inaudible).

Frank: I was just up there the other day.

Bill: Yes, that just sort of introduces the picture.

Frank: That is a private club now. There was a lot of hard feelings when they sold that the girl scouts. About the same as the one at Harvey's Lake. I don't want that one it's tacky. That's Camp Anawanda.

Bill: Anawanda, yes. This is coming into Luzerne. That station has now been torn down and now there is an apartment building in the location. And I was surprised when we had to board the train the four of us. And the conductor said, "You can't see anything here go out and ride the foot boards". He let me ride out there in front all the way out to Harvey's Lake including crossing the trestle rights, right above Pizza Perfect. This was the trestle. Some of these shots

were taken a couple years later, the color is slightly different in them, but I remember crossing that trestle holding on with one arm and this little Bel Howe movie camera in the other.

Renee: What road is it that goes under the trestle?

Bill and Frank: Carverton Road.

Bill: There we are going across. See we were along the lake. That is why I thought you might be interested in this.

Renee: I am interested in this. Wow.

Bill: We went out through Trucksville here. That was the old Exxon station I believe or was it. I'm not sure. The kids used to wave to us. This is coming in to Shavertown is it? Yes.

Frank: When they used to ride over the hill. What was it twice a day they used to blow the horn and whistle when they were over on that side.

Bill: We put a boxcar of lumber or something into that lumber company there. There's a track in those weeds. This was the manager of the Ackland store warehouse in Forty Fort. His son and myself and my buddy who loved trains that was the old Offset Paperback by California fruit. That was no longer there. That goes right alongside of, right in there too. This was the Dallas shopping center. This is crossing 309 only 2 lanes then going north there toward Tunkhannock and here we are coming into Dallas. The first thing here is the old freight station and the passenger station behind it. This is Church street crossing. We got quite a train that day. And this is behind Dallas behind the telephone building on Lake Street. There's a passing side there and we rearranged the train and I don't know what we did. We didn't get off the locomotive so we don't know who parked behind us. They had an outside wooden boxcar that was a rarity those days. That was my friend who did the railroading and that is the back of the Commonwealth Telephone building at the time. That was the engineer, but I never asked him for his name. Probably got introduced to him. The crew consisted of the engineer, the conductor, and the front brakeman and the rear brakeman four people. Now we are going between Dallas and Harvey's Lake that leaves the highway and goes out towards the fields and woods there. There's no road real close to it. You see we wonder all over the edges. I go on trains and they say get away from the window, it's too dangerous. This is coming into Harvey's Lake and that is the Methodist church there at Kunkle, or from Kunkle. And now these couple of shots were taken the following year so they are geographically where they should be, but not time wise. But this is where it came into the lake there.

Frank: It is interesting, all those people you see there and all those docks and everything you see from the Methodist church up to Hanson's, those people did not own lakefront, because the railroad tracks were there. When we moved out there, there were only 2 places you could get an automobile across those tracks and to the lake. One was at the Methodist church the other was at William's Brewery, it wasn't a brewery, it was a bottling and distributing place there. They had a place where they had (inaudible) they could go over those railroad tracks, but there was nothing

between Hanson's and Alderson were you could break down. And that eventually ended up in a lot of lawsuits. (inaudible)

Bill: I showed this to a rotary club a few years ago. They enjoyed more the old cars than they did the trains. And of course the tracks went right under the roller coaster and that train work is still there, it's an entrance to the rock band concerts. Here the kids used to run some of the local kids would run and we were moving so slow through there they jumped right on to Noxen and come right back. Now we get passed Hanson's there at this point they made me come in the cab because they said the track was too rough, it was downgrade, and we were going to go a little fast and it will would be safer inside. As you can see we bounced around a bit.

Renee: Were they just doing general deliveries on this run?

Bill: Yes, the tannery was still in operation out there. (pause) And now we are coming into the outskirts of Noxen and crossing the creek out there.

Frank: They're talking of building what, a high rise or not high rises, but homes out there where the tannery is?

Bill: They talked about it, but they determined the ground was too contaminated.

Frank: Is that right (Laughter).

Bill: That is why they tore down the tannery. They got government money to help with that, I think, I'm not sure. This is the old station at Noxen, I understand it has been restored, and the track went further on. If you want to learn about them I have maps; it went all the way up to Towanda.

Frank: But didn't that go up to ...

Bill: Went up to Ricketts' (inaudible)

Frank: A little lake up there, Mountain Springs.

Bill: Mountain Springs, yes, they hauled a lot of ice out of there in the 30's and 40's. But we dropped the car off at the track there at the station and we wanted to ride back, but they said no. It was too late in the day. One of the officials had to introduce us to the crew to make sure we were all legal, he wanted to go home for supper and the car could travel a lot faster than we could back. So that's what I have, I have this is more shots of the different parts of the area there. The Tannery closed in 1961 and the train got smaller. There is a one car train engine, one car, and caboose. This was taken from the yacht club with a telephoto lens I guess.

Frank: When did that, was that '62 when they stopped that?

Bill: '61 they closed the tannery.

Frank: Yes, but I mean the train.

Bill: The train that was an official abandonment date. I took, I stole the paper off the station. It was just a sheet of paper that said of when they officially closed (inaudible) and all that stuff. When I took these pictures it was a couple of years later because she is now 50 years old. I think that is my daughter in there. Look at how beautiful she is. This is the trestle from the Methodist Church in Trucksville right across the highway up in the hill there. I went up there on Sunday and took some pictures. And there was siding and I never knew what that was for or why it was there, but we found the northern side of the bridge.

Renee: So how long was it from the last run on December 22nd until they decided to remove some of the lines and dismantle the stations.

Bill: At least 2 years I think. Wouldn't you say? This was the (inaudible) and that man was a railroad official that lived across the street there before he died. Harry Ritz.

Frank: Harry Ritz, really?

Bill: He and his father worked for the railroad all their lives that is all they ever did.

Frank: His office was downtown. Was it in Wilkes-Barre?

Bill: I don't know what he did. I have a padlock off that switch of his. Then they dismantled the trestle.

Frank: Because he used to come in the office an awful lot because he was one of our clients.

Bill: He was very active in the (inaudible).

Frank: Yes.

Bill: He gave me different things. I have somewhere on that bookshelf I have the Lehigh Valley Passenger Train that sold cigars in their Johnny-car I suppose and then they got special cigars made up with the Lehigh Valley logo on the band, the little paper band that went around it. He gave me about a dozen of them that never been used. That is all I have. These are other pictures that you can look at, you can let it run or we can talk. This was a, one-year there was a van trip from New York City to Ashley composed principally of New York City people And I wanted to take pictures because you don't see too many steam engines like that and that was over in east end. About near where the Tubs is. You know where we are talking about. We would park up there waiting for the train and it was delayed and if it was delayed it hardly ever got there, but that's where that was taken. And then one day later in the last gasps of the of the Lehigh Valley railroad as an independent railroad, my first wife died of cancer and her bridge group invited me up for a picnic the following year at a cottage north of Tunkhannock. So I shot there and took pictures of the Lehigh Valley trains going by in the afternoon, there were two or three of them.

As you can see the Lehigh Valley was famous because it didn't know what colors to paint their engines, cabooses, and cars. Every time they kept changing the color scheme constantly. There is green one there's a white one. But that is where I got these pictures from; this is still Lehigh Valley Railroad. And that first shot that was a little tiny yard switch exit they needed a little more power than we had left to help the train. There are a couple of diesels covered in dust made it completely white. And now we are going back to the van trip into Ashley. And this was the old tracks, which have been long gone torn up of the Central Railroad New Jersey. In fact somebody stole the rails a couple years later. A couple guys and a truck went out in the daytime and spent about a month taking all the rails up, people assted they were all legal. Six months later the railroad decided didn't know what happened they didn't authorize it. (inaudible laughter). This was a pusher engine coming down. We were still waiting for the steam train and here it comes and I guess with the exposure and guessed wrong. I am way over-exposed. As you can see it was double header it was now about two hours late it got to Ashley. Here it is coming into Ashley. They had to switch the cars around of course to turn around and one of the faster cars jumped the track if the yard wasn't too profitable and the track wasn't too good a shape. So they got a late start and these people didn't head back to New York until midnight, they were supposed to be back for supper. That is a railroad in New Jersey station night club now, that would be Market Street I believe that is what it looked like. That might be right after the flood to. I don't know I'm not sure.

Frank: I remember back in about '47-'48, I had just got out of the service. And coming on the train from Buffalo to Wilkes-Barre they used to come across the Nicholson Bridge and they used to call the Nicholson Bridge one of the Seven Wonders of the World. And as the train would come across it would get on the south side of the bridge and they would stop and let the passengers out and take pictures of the bridge. But I was always in a hurry and I'm cursing that they were wasting their time. Now those pictures are probably worth something.

Bill: Yes. This is the area Lackawanna. Our factory building was, I went on the roof of it taking pictures and of course the freight station burned down a few years ago. And the yard's no longer there. There is still a track there and the guys in the office knew I liked trains. One July afternoon they said I could hop on the edge and they were going to run it back and forth for an hour before they quit for the day and I had my movie camera and took some pictures. I think they ran it back and forth just for me. I'm not sure now. But it was a sending point for the coal trains. I believe the wood, Woodwork power was still in existence down there in Larksville. This was a brakeman's station or a little hut down at the part of the yard at the southern end. That was our building there the paper box plant. That was my business all my life making paper boxes empty ones. And then I pulled into the roundhouse, which is still standing. The turntables have been demolished many years ago, but they kept 2 engines there all the time when I took these that would be in the 60's. That would be a fueling facility there for the diesel. This would be probably a year or so later I don't remember the dates. This is a Narrow gauge passenger car from Newfoundland I believe, Canada. There is a guy out near Berwick and Bloomsburg he bought the thing and it was being shipped to him. The wheels for it are on the following black car. Here the tracks are abandoned they were starting to tear them up. You realize that in the very early days when they had to get some fill living on a railroad yard or anything else they often used fine coal dust. People hadn't invented scoopers in those days and they end up burned the

coal that was used wasn't saleable or had no commercial value if it wasn't dusted real fine. After the railroads abandoned the yard they had to go in and buy the coal out. They had to get a mining permit. At that time we are now down to one engine permanently the yard and the caboose they stayed there all weekend with the motor running. That is Walter Dawn he delivered the LCL right from the station. And these are old WWII hospital cards after the flood of '72.

(End of side A)

Frank: ... These people meeting them at the docks And the guests would bring a covered dish and I think that is carried over today. We have 3 meetings a year that are covered dish meetings. We will have someone in the club running it for the entrée and so on, but everybody would bring a covered dish. Another tradition was the shipwreck party, and is moved over now. They call it Margaritaville with the Jimmy Buffet background, but it's very popular and this year they had to close the reservations at 250. So, it's under a different name, but it is still that proportion of the club itinerary.

Bill: They threw out a lot from the club too.

Frank: Then, we had at the end of the year for many years cups and flags. This is where they gave out awards for the sailing and that was discontinued a few years ago because there weren't that many sailors anymore. Another tradition they had was they started out with a Christmas party and then it moved over into the Commodore's ball and that became another community affair and for years it was the first social event of the year. They used to hold it in January and the tradition there was the passing of the hat. They would, and this still goes on today at the Commodore's ball, all the past Commodores and attendants come up and they would take the Commodore's hat if you will. And then they would call the next one in and they would pass it on to the current Commodore and it kind of signifies his beginning of his term. That's still tradition that goes on. There are a lot of things that have carried over from way back in the 1940's that's carried over. It may be under a different name, but the club used to be very active, it was more of a family club I think that then it they were closer-knit because everybody then was into sailing. Occasionally you would see a motor boat at the lake.

Bill: Another thing the club was always short on cash. We always asked for volunteers.
(Laughter)

Frank: All the work when they bought when the club purchased the airplane hanger from Russell Smith all the work was done by or let's say 90% of it was done by the members. They removed the doors and they put the outhouses in and everything. It was in what 1963-64 before they had inside plumbing there, but most of it was done by the club because they were all interested in one thing. Today all of the cleaning of the club and the grounds is all out-sourced.

Bill: Our dues cost a little bit more.

Frank: Yes, the dues are more and they even pay more, but they don't have a common interest anymore, because we have a few with sailboats, quite a few with motor boats, but we have many

of them that have nothing in the way of a boat. And they are strictly social members and that is the purpose of the club for them. But we need those because if it wasn't for those social members then the club could not support itself. We have to have those. Like I say this is a lot of tradition that is carried over. I don't know anything else. When I was Toastmaster and carried the ceremony must have been 20 some years ago.

Bill: Yes, he was Toastmaster and he knows jokes.

Frank: But, I think the club is healthy. It's, we take in just a few members only replacing the now the ones that move away or like the old geezers die, but years ago what they had fashion shows, and teenage dancing, tarp parties, remember the gambling parties they used to have.

Bill: But things have change. We used to have a clean up day. Where we had a little Sandy Beach there, but the sand in a year's time washes into the lake, but always goes in one direction. So, every spring we had to put it back. We got all the kids out there and bring all their little sand buckets and anything else they had we spent all day long and plus the slips were right along the shore were so shallow you couldn't put a boat in it. So, they all got out there because the water was not very deep and we shoveled it all back. But now it's against the law. You can't move that sand anymore and when we built the one dock, the original dock that had to be replaced a few years ago. And we got permission to replace it and everything else and I think it is 12 inches longer than it's supposed to be legally.

Frank: The Commodore's Ball used to be formal. Used to shut the reservations off at about 300 something because like I say that there were many outside people that came in and they made the Commodore's Ball what it is. At one time the Irem Temple out here refused to take a reservation for the following year and the reason they gave was the yacht club members were too rowdy. Now when a bunch of Shriners calls somebody rowdy, they are rowdy (Laughter).

Bill: Lee Vincent's Orchestra played at the Commodore's ball for what 20 years I believe. It was a tradition and it was always held at the country club. We used to do it in January. They preferred to have it between Thanksgiving and Christmas, but we couldn't get a date so it ended up always being held in the first half of January usually. We even chanced off a boat one year. I don't think you remember, maybe you will, that we sold chances for \$10 a piece

Frank: I vaguely remember that, but I don't think I was a member yet.

Bill: Yes that was real early.

Renee: So how does one become the Commodore or a Toastmaster?

Frank: Hard work! (laughter)

Bill: We have to elect a set of officers and I think the Commodores limit is to 2 years am I correct? Frank?

Frank: I don't know.

Bill: I think they are fed up with it after 2 years, let's put it that way. It's a lot of work.

Frank: Yes, I don't know if it is in the by-laws, but I don't think it is in the by-laws. But it is again tradition 2 years some them stay 1 year, some of them two. I think the way they choose the commodore is open, you can have nominations from the floor, but it is a certain procedure that you must go through. But they usually they pick someone who has served on the Board of Governors, someone who is active.

Bill: The present Commodore would select a nominating committee in the middle of the summer. And they would talk to different people and set up a slate, which includes the officers and also the Board of Governors rotates I believe 1/3 change every year, and they select new members for that. They submit their recommendations I believe 2 or 3 weeks ahead of the meeting when we take the vote and they will accept nominations from the floor on that date too. It is pretty well cut and dry from that point. No one passes (inaudible).

Frank: Again there are certain procedures some many days and all the members have to be notified by mail so many days ahead that part of it is all taken care of. The Board of Governors too you as say they are replaced. You notice some of them are what a 4-year term and a 2-year term...

Bill: But that's how many years they have to go.

Frank: Yes, but they do that intentionally so it isn't...

Bill: There's continuity there.

Bill: You mentioned Ed Roth before. Yes, I knew him pretty well.

Renee: I interviewed him maybe a month ago. Because he used to own one of the...

Bill: I made a boat model for him, too, it's a little one because his family owned that one boat there in the 30's and I build things out of wood you see. I have another model up there that is a steamboat from the Susquehanna River. Before the trolley system was inaugurated steamboats took people from Nanticoke to Pittston basically. And starting about 1870 probably they were run out of business by 1890 or 95' because the trolley cars had come and they were a lot faster than steamboats and they could run in the wintertime when the river froze. I was commodore when the lake froze over those 2 years that was between Christmas and New Years. Someone had to check it, turn the bubbler system on. (inaudible)

Frank: We used to have ... in our locker room, he had written on the wall that tells you what kind of a locker room we had, but I would write down when we started the DI search or bubblers and when we would shut them off. And I didn't know we had that in place 30 some years something like that. And you could see a gradual decrease, it used to be that we would start the

DI searcher/bubblers we would start them sometimes before Thanksgiving and we wouldn't shut them off until April. Then it got so it didn't start it until December and now lately they don't start it until January. The ice doesn't get that thick, years ago I'll swear that ice was like this and today if we get five inches of ice, it's a cold winter.

Bill: I have a video on ice cutting at the lake at Bear Creek in 1926. They had to shave the ice to 14 inches because if it were any bigger than that it wouldn't fit the icebox. (inaudible)

Frank: We used to be out on that ice and you could hear the bubbles running under the ice and in the winter that oxidation or the plants give off a gas that has to go somewhere as a bubble. That bubble would run under the ice and it would sound like a freight train coming. The first few times we heard it we sat down we didn't know what was happening; those bubbles that run under there.

Bill: Do you have any more questions for us?

Renee: No, I am all out. Alright.

End of tape Side B

Web Notes:

Page 231: Pinella should be Pinola.

Page 233: The model of the Lake steamboat Acoma was later gifted by Wentz to this web-editor, the great-grandson of George M. Anderson, Captain of the Acoma.

Page 265: A burgee is a flag or pennant representing a recreational boating organization.

Page 236: Lake Cansinopia perhaps should be Cazenovia.

Page 238: The girl scout camp on the west side of the Susquehanna River was Camp Onawandah not Anawanda.

Page 245: The model of the Lake steamboat Natoma was gifted by Wentz to Dallas jeweler Ed Roth whose family held an ownership interest in the Natoma in its final years. Wentz also built a model of Susquehanna River steamboat Wilkes-Barre. Its current location is not known.

This oral interview is one of many interviews totaling 274 pages conducted by the Back Mountain Oral History Project 2006, College Misericordia, and coordinated by Prof. Allan W. Austin who provided permission to reprint this interview on the www.harveyslake.org website. Thank you, Allan! Other oral history interviews from the project will later appear on this site.

FCP/ February 2023