



Interview with Philip May

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.
Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

Date of Interview: August 10, 2000

Name of Interviewer: Douglas Aumack

Premises of Interview: Mr. May's home, Ocean Grove, NJ

Birthdate of Subject: August 4, 1939

Mr. Aumack: How did you come to Monmouth County?

Mr. May: I was born in Long Branch in Monmouth County and I've lived here all my life, so that's how I came here.

Mr. Aumack: What hospital was it?

Mr. May: It was Hazard's Hospital, but is now Monmouth Medical Center.

Mr. Aumack: How small was that hospital?

Mr. May: I imagine it was quite small; of course I don't remember because I was small myself. But I know from my mother telling me that it was a small hospital and Dr. Hazard was in charge.

Mr. Aumack: How long was your family here before you were born, do you know?



**Mr. May with friends
celebrating the last dinner
on the Titanic**

Mr. May: My family goes back in Monmouth on the Covert side; the family home was in Wayside, and I don't know how many years they were there, but probably from the early 1800s. Maybe even before then. There's a Methodist Church on the hill in Wayside that seemed to be the church of all the farm families in the area and we're still there. I was just there with my sisters, up visiting the grave sites; her husband died not too long ago. But we're there, and it's interesting when you come from a small town like this and you've stayed in the area. I had a friend who I went to school with, who was a classmate of mine, and years later, I guess it was about thirty years later, I saw her. I had the Pine Tree hotel here in Ocean Grove, and she sought me out and said, "Do you know we're related?" Well it was that up on the hill in that cemetery, that she found out. I guess the families intermarried. But that's the one side of the family, how we got the connection with Ocean Grove here, where I am today. My great grandfather was a baker for West Point and he moved from West Point about the same time Ocean Grove was founded, and opened a bakery here. I don't know too much about the bakery, but I do remember my grandfather showing me pictures of himself as a little boy, on the streets of Ocean Grove with a goat cart, selling bread. And then my grandfather had a big horse drawn truck and it said "No flies on the bread, bury the name of Magathan." So he came down here and the rest is history. My mother was born here; my grandfather had married into the Coverts, the family out in Wayside, so we've been in this area ever since. We go back a long time here. Probably the Coverts side goes back a lot longer than the Magathan side. They came over before the Revolutionary War and they fought with Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys. But the family member who came first eventually moved west with the land grants. They all moved to Kansas. That was a part of the family I never knew about. I just thought they came from Scotland with my great-grandfather coming over. One of the members of my family did research and found out most all of them are out in Kansas, including my great grandfather, who was born there. He worked at West Point and then came to Ocean Grove. So he didn't come from Scotland, he came by way of Kansas! I've never met the families out there. I have to go out some day. My cousin has been out.

Mr. Aumack: And this is the Magathans?

Mr. May: Yes, this is the Magathans. It was MacGathan when they came over, and of course they changed it when they entered the country to Magathan.

Mr. Aumack: So who went to West Point? What was his full name, do you know?

Mr. May: Yes, John Magathan.

Mr. Aumack: Do you know when he graduated from West Point?

Mr. May: He didn't go to West Point, he was the baker for West Point. I guess he had been in the baking business out in Kansas, and his family and he got this job in West Point. And then from there he moved to Ocean Grove and brought his four children with him. My grandfather was one of them.

Mr. Aumack: Now when he sold his bread, was it more door to door while having his store at the same time?

Mr. May: I'm not sure, I really don't know. I just remember seeing pictures of the old bakery truck, and my grandfather obviously went from door to door because he had the goat cart with the bread in it.

Mr. Aumack: So he first used a goat and then a horse?

Mr. May: Well, my great grandfather was the one that had the wagon. My grandfather was a little boy and he had the goat cart.

Mr. Aumack: Do you remember the name of the bakery?

Mr. May: No I don't. I remember seeing on the truck "No flies on the bread during the name of Magathan." It was kind of interesting.

Mr. Aumack: It was an advertisement as well as a sign.

Mr. May: Right. That was printed on the side of the truck. I don't know too much about this, my grandfather wasn't too into the history of the family, so what we learned was when somebody did research in Washington, DC.

Mr. Aumack: Now, what is your earliest memory of childhood growing up?

Mr. May: I was born in 1939, and I guess by the time I was two or three I remember my father went into the war. He was in the Navy, stationed in the Pacific. I had sisters. You met one of them, I guess when you came in, but they're ten years older than I am. And they're identical twins. My mother had the twins and then me ten years later, and I'd say I was about two or three years old when my father went into the service. So my earliest recollections are just being in that house, and the blackouts. You know during the war, when you're a little kid, you don't know why all the lights are out, and they pulled all the shades down, and so on and so forth. But we had the blackouts in case we were invaded or something, the invaders wouldn't see any targets of lights and so on. I do remember that we lived in Shrewsbury Township, which is now Tinton Falls. I remember the airport too, and that was neat,



**Mr. May at age six,
after winning a contest**

because there was an airport in Red Bank. In fact there's a restaurant called the Airport Inn on Shrewsbury Avenue and one of my earliest memories of the years we were on Peach Street and we could watch the planes taking off from the Red Bank airport. I remember just sitting on the porch and we used to have a little game guessing what color plane would come up next. That was kind of fun. But the dirt road and the open land, you know this wasn't farmland, it was open land across the street. I remember going to school in Tinton Falls. I remember kindergarten, because it was all day. You went all day and you had a naptime, you slept and so on. It wasn't like now when you go for two and a half hours and you go home. It was all day kindergarten. I was only in Tinton Falls in the school there for one year, and then we moved to Shrewsbury. My mother moved us there. She had a rough time of it because my father was gone and she had three kids, and the landlords wanted to either sell the house or use it for themselves, so we had to get out. She had to move the family herself and relocate in Shrewsbury.

Mr. Aumack: So your father passed away in the War?

Mr. May: No, no. But this move happened while he was stationed in the Pacific. Then when he got out, of course, he was able to do the things that needed to be done with this house that my mother had purchased. It was very rough, it was right at the end of the Depression, and then from the Depression we went right into the War.

Mr. Aumack: Why did you move to what is now Tinton Falls, from where were you, in Long Branch?

Mr. May: We didn't move in Long Branch. I was only born there. We lived in Eatontown.

Mr. Aumack: Why did you move from Eatontown to Tinton Falls?

Mr. May: Because the house was available. My mother was looking for a place to rent. We were there for a few years, and when that house was no longer available, then she had to make the move, and she had to make it without my father because he was in the service. We moved to Shrewsbury. I think they had that place for about forty years. I grew up in Shrewsbury. I moved there when I was five. We never moved again, and as I say, they lived there in the same house for about forty or more years.

Mr. Aumack: What types of planes were at this airport?

Mr. May: They weren't military planes. I don't remember too much because I was only about three or four years old, but I do remember the airport. I remember one incident. I guess I was always the kind of kid that got into things, and I just decided that I was going to fly an airplane. I was about four. Somehow I got into

the airport, where the planes were, got up inside the plane, was in the cabin, and I was up there having a ball, waving to people. They were having to search for me, and they found me in the airplane. School busses took you to school and brought you home. I was only there one year, but my sisters were older, and I remember sometimes the bus would wrap around and stop near my grandparents in Eatontown. Now we were living on Peach Street off Shrewsbury Avenue there, what is now Tinton Falls, and there was a bar at the end, which is now a restaurant, the Airport Inn. The bus used to stop there, and now that I look back, I guess the bus driver just stopped there for a quick one after he did the rounds. But I had been with my sisters once or twice, and they went to my grandparents in Eatontown while he was bringing the bus back to where they parked it. So I told my mother, "Mom, I'm going away," and she said, "Where?" and I said, "I'm going to see my grand mom." And she said, "Have a good time," and said goodbye. Well, I got on the bus, had the bus driver convinced that that's where I was supposed to go, and if he hadn't stopped for a drink, I would have been at my grandmother's. My father and mother were just frantic, but I was up on the highway on the bus waving to her. She asked, "What are you doing in there?" And I said, "I told you I was going." I remember getting lost once in Red Bank. I was sitting on the curb, and I wasn't really upset, I was just frustrated because I didn't know where she was. A cop came over and said, "What are you doing here little boy?" and I said, "I lost my mother." So he made the search and found her. Then we moved to Shrewsbury, and most of my memories are from Shrewsbury.

Mr. Aumack: What's your fondest memory about Shrewsbury?



Mr. May: Shrewsbury? I was there from five until college, so I have a lot of memories of Shrewsbury. I remember in the fifth or sixth grade and having this teacher who was just wonderful. Everybody dreaded her. She had been there for years, and she had taught this one's father, and that one's grandfather, and so on, and she was very strict, but she turned out to be a real asset for me because she really got me on to school. Just that one person.

Mr. Aumack: Is that school still standing?

**Mr. May at school
in Shrewsbury**

Mr. May: Unfortunately, no. That school was a wonderful, wonderful school, it was built in 1908 and its façade was wonderful. It was a beautiful classic school. Mind you, after I left Shrewsbury, I went on to college, and I taught at Little Silver, and I'm very much interested in the teaching profession and am very involved in it. If I had stayed in Shrewsbury, I probably would have gotten more involved in saving the school, because the people in the community came up to vote in Shrewsbury two or three times. The people voted not to take the school down, but the board wanted to expand, so it went ahead and got permission from the state to level against the wishes of the

community. So I mean it was unfortunate historically, because the piece of architecture was beautiful. My twin sisters were a big part of my life because they were ten years old when I was born, and I became like the living toy to them, and so they were always interested in what happened to me, and what I did, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Aumack: They were two babysitters and two guardians.

Mr. May: Right, but it's a different experience when they're identical twins because the two of them are just -

Mr. Aumack: What makes them so -

Mr. May: So unique? Well, they're so much alike and they're so different. So close, yet they wanted to be independent. They were the kind of twins that didn't want to be exactly like the other one and dress like the other one, and so on, looking for their independence. Boy, they used to tease me. My family name was Buddy - "Do you want to come here, Buddy? Come over here with me." And I'd go over there and the other would say, "Oh, you don't want me anymore." You know, then they would drive me nuts, back and forth, back and forth. I think that just growing up with that has made it possible for me to deal with different factions, or to be aware not to neglect this one because I learned quite a lesson from them. I learned how to deal with the demands that are made on you from different sides. But they're both in Florida.

Mr. Aumack: Describe what it was like living in Shrewsbury.

Mr. May: I don't know what the class size is now, but in my graduating class I think there were only seventeen kids. Like everything, Shrewsbury grew, but it was just a nice environment to grow up in.

Mr. Aumack: Did a lot of people know everyone else?

Mr. May: In Shrewsbury? Yes, and I was rather involved in a lot of things. I was in the Boy Scouts, and I was in different choral groups, and we put on plays. I remember this teacher in particular, Helen Lang, that I had, I don't know how she did it, but I had her for fifth grade when she had fifth and sixth. As a teacher, I know having just one grade is difficult, but she had fifth and sixth. She was so organized she'd teach a lesson in fifth, and then she'd give you a reinforcement exercise, or whatever, to start on, then she'd go teach a lesson in sixth. We were in the same room. Two rows of fifth grade and two rows of sixth grade. And she'd go back and forth all day. And yet, with doing that, she'd still have time on every Friday for the combined class to have a talent show, or program. It wasn't like it was a special one, but every Friday people would get up there who wanted to play their instrument, or they would form a singing group, or recite poetry. About an hour a week was set aside for that. And that was just wonderful. We didn't

have any time in class to prepare for it, but we'd prepare after school. We had a singing group, three or four of us, and we'd get together and practice our songs to sing on Friday.

Mr. Aumack: How many kids did she have at once?

Mr. May: Well, as I say, there were probably about seventeen in my class, so she must have had thirty to thirty-five kids in two different grades.

Mr. Aumack: But they were all in the same room at the same time.

Mr. May: Yes, two or three rows of one, and two or three rows of the other. Just physically getting all those kids in was a problem. I don't know what the sixth grade was, I just remember what my class was, so maybe it was a smaller sixth grade. I know we had seventeen, so maybe they had thirteen, I don't know.

Mr. Aumack: It just boggles my mind how she would teach two classes at once. How did she do that?

Mr. May: Well, I know how to do it because it is my field. It's not easy. And she was really good at inspiring kids in that kind of environment; she really was good. There was a little penny candy store we used to stop at. It seemed like forever, but it was probably only three blocks in the other direction towards the Old Christ Church and the Allen House. And I remember the store was between school and the Allen House. I remember once in a while venturing up there for ice cream. Lovett's Nursery was just all fields, it wasn't a mall. Between Red Bank and the Old Christ church, going towards the place on the left hand side, there was Lovett's Nursery, which has been leveled now, and has housing developments on it. When I was a kid, it was all open fields.

Mr. Aumack: How has Shrewsbury changed?

Mr. May: Well, it's just become more populated, but it's still a very nice community. But having taught in Little Silver, I have ties there. Also, because of my involvement in the teaching profession, I represented the teachers from all over the county as the president of the Monmouth County Educational System. There were ten thousand members and about fifty or fifty-five locals. But Shrewsbury was very close to my heart because I grew up there. I never got very far, you see. I grew up in Shrewsbury, went to Red Bank High School, came back and taught at Little Silver; it's all within a couple miles. My whole growing up and business life was in that area. My ties are here in Ocean Grove because of family. My grandfather's sisters stayed here.

Mr. Aumack: Now after grammar school, where did you go to high school?



Mr. May in high school

Mr. May: We went to Red Bank High School. We were tuition students then, it wasn't regionalized. We were tuition students from Little Silver and Shrewsbury. It was a big change for us because we come from about seventeen kids in my class to a big high school setting. We used to catch the bus to the high school.

Mr. Aumack: How many people were in your graduating class?

Mr. May: From high school? About one hundred and eighty.

Mr. Aumack: How big were the classes?

Mr. May: In high school? It varied. The gym classes were always huge, but I don't remember class size being a problem, I don't remember being jamming in, so I would say the largest class was twenty-five or thirty students.

Mr. Aumack: When your mother or father wanted to go shopping for food or clothing, where would they go?

Mr. May: Red Bank was the closest. Even today, Red Bank has remained a lovely area. I went to high school there, and when we went to town, we went to Red Bank. There was the butcher shop there, there were different places there, and places to shop for clothing, and various other things you would need. However, I remember going about twice a month to Long Branch. Long Branch was a bigger city. Red Bank was small, and Long Branch at the time was a very nice city, and my mother would go there, two, three or four times a month to shop. But the big place was Asbury Park. That's why it breaks your heart just looking at it today, because it was just magnificent. Maybe once a month we would make the big time and we'd go to Steinbach's in Asbury Park, and Canadian Furs, and Tepper's, and all of the fine stores that were there. Interestingly enough, in later years when I was in college, I worked in Asbury Park. I worked there before, during, and after the riots, so I could really see what happened to Asbury Park. I was there at sort of a critical time. Just like really in Ocean Grove. When I had the Pine Tree Inn, the hotel here in the Grove, it was before, during, and after the gates coming down and opening up Ocean Grove. But going back to where we shopped, Asbury was the big place.

Mr. Aumack: What kind of store was Tepper's?

Mr. May: Tepper's was sort of a gift shop, linens; it would be comparable to your bigger department stores only it was small, but it carried fine items.

Mr. Aumack: Do you remember when the roads were paved in Long Branch and Shrewsbury?

Mr. May: As far back as I remember, they were all paved. All the main roads, at least. In Shrewsbury, the house I grew up in was at 40 Laurel Street. Laurel Street went up to Thomas Avenue, I guess it was, but anyway it just ended, but then when they put in the development, they continued the road up. It was an all-wooded area when I grew up; it was just a road that went around like a rectangle with houses on it, and the rest was woods behind it, but of course it's all developed now.

Mr. Aumack: Did you ever use any public transportation to go anywhere?

Mr. May: All through high school. Because we were tuition students, we didn't have the yellow school bus pick us up. We got to the high school using a bus pass, so we used the public transportation for that.

Mr. Aumack: Do you remember what company was in charge of that?

Mr. May: I remember Borough Busses; it might have been that.

Mr. Aumack: Let's go back to Asbury Park. When did you start working there and what was your job?

Mr. May: I went to college in 1958 -

Mr. Aumack: What college was that?

Mr. May: Montclair State College. At that time I had two options: first of all, I came from a family where you felt loved, and it didn't matter what you did. So there wasn't the emphasis to succeed to be loved. It wasn't the push, and so on. I really had a very interesting life because I was free to do what I wanted. My mother and father just let me explore everything and anything that I wanted to do. My sisters were a big encouragement for that freedom, too. I know the sister you met here, Evelyn, used to say, "There's no such word as 'can't.' If you want to try it, just do it." So I grew up that way. I'd always thought I'd want to be a teacher, but I also thought that I'd like to go into business, and I didn't quite know which field to go in, and I wasn't under any pressure to go into either one of them. So I had applied to NYU to study retailing. In fact, there was a store in Red Bank which was a very fine men's clothing store then. It wasn't Roots, Roots came later, but it was J. Kridel's. Kridel's was the big clothing store. Kridel's had a scholarship and I got the scholarship. And as I said, I didn't have the pressure like, "Oh, you got a scholarship, so you have to go." But I did get the J. Kridel scholarship. It was four thousand dollars, a thousand dollars each year. Today that seems like nothing, but at that time one thousand dollars paid for a whole year at NYU. I remember thinking I would be probably living in the Village, and

my expense would not be the college, because I had the thousand dollars, but it would be for the room and board. I'd have rent and so on. So I also applied to Montclair. Well, it was a state school at that time, and believe it or not, the tuition at Montclair was only ninety-six dollars a semester. So at Montclair, the whole year's tuition was less than two hundred dollars. But I decided to go to Montclair because I could go in for teaching, and I could also major in business. So I entered Montclair as a business major, with social business minor, and then went taking courses in education. I majored in accounting, so I could either venture out in accounting or into teaching of business. But that wasn't to be. My college career was from one thing to another.

Mr. Aumack: So you did a lot of exploring.

Mr. May: Oh, I certainly did. I had a speech class in my first semester as a freshman. The kids wanted me to be class president, well I turned that down, thank God. I turned that down, or I probably wouldn't have made it through the semester. But, I also had that speech class, and I really liked the speech class. Then the head of the Speech Department called me into his office and said, "Phil, we'd like you to be a speech major." Well, I really liked speech, although I never thought about going into that. It was dramatics and speech therapy. They wanted me to do the lead in the school play, *Our Town*. Well, I just felt that I should do some background work, I was the new kid on the block, and that should go to a junior or senior. So I turned it down, which is kind of weird when I think back on it. Most kids would say, "That's great," but as a freshman, that was my view on things. Also, I was rushed for three or four fraternities. It was like a madhouse. I went from the little town of Shrewsbury and the hardest to get into fraternities thought they were the top dogs and so on. I finally joined a service fraternity in college. So I was in a fraternity during my first semester. I should have just broken away and become a speech major. But I just had this idea that I would always have business as an ace in the hole. So then I was trying to complete two majors, and then with social business minor, you had to minor in business also. So I was going to school in the summers for that, and I got to the middle of my junior year and decided that I really wanted to go into speech. The Speech Department had been after me. Well, then they had a problem within Montclair, in the departments. The Business Department didn't want to let me go. I thought it would be an easy transition, and it would have been as a freshman. The head of the Speech Department was delighted that I was making this change, because he had been hoping that I would do that all along. When the business department found out about it, well, they were at each other's throats over what department I was going to go in, and I remember the Speech Department head calling me in and saying, "Phil, we'll help you get into any college in the country in speech, but there's so many problems here within Montclair with the departments that we can't take you." So I thought well, they're not going to do that to me, I've always been independent. I also had an art class. Now I never had any art background at all, whatsoever. Shrewsbury did have an art teacher, but the program was very limited. In high school, I never had a thing in art. At Montclair, I had this art

appreciation course which I really liked. The head of the department was Dr. Calcia. I thought they're not going to make me stay in a department, so I went to the head of the Art Department and I said, "What could I do to become an art major?" She asked for the background; I said I had none. So I was like an experiment, because I was fresh and new, with no preconceived ideas of what should be done. She couldn't believe it. She said, "All I can tell you is, if you're in the middle of your junior year and you're willing to switch majors into a major you know nothing about, then I will accept you into the department." The next semester I didn't register for business classes. I was not a speech major. So as far as I was concerned, I wasn't any major. When I talked to the head of the Art Department, I told one of those little white lies. I said I didn't have a major. I finally got through to the Dean and I told him that I didn't have any major and he said, "But you've been here for two and a half years. Nobody goes here with two and a half years without declaring a major." And I said, "I don't have any major right now, but I want to be an art major, and Dr. Calcia will take me into the art department." And he said, "Well, you've got to get a major. So, if she's agreeable we'll just send you to the Art Department." So I became an art major. I had to make up three years of all of the classes, and in art you had to minor in art as well. So I had all these art classes. It was a whole different field. Then the head of the Business Department found I hadn't been coming to class. Well, I didn't have any business classes. He said, "I haven't seen you in class." And I said, "No, I'm not a business major anymore." And he said, "What do you think, the Speech Department will have you?" And I said, "No, I'm an art major." He sat down and said, "I don't want you to go, you'll be a wonderful business teacher, and I think you'll be great." And I said, "Why didn't you talk to me about this before? It's too late, I'm an art major, but I'll continue as a business minor." But he didn't want that, it was either all or nothing. So I finally graduated with about five and a half years of credits, from speech to business, and finally majoring and minoring in art, and my first job was in Wall Township as an art supervisor. I had sixty-five teachers working under me, and I was the new kid on the block just entering the teaching profession. And I worked with kids, also. I did demonstration lessons and worked with them on follow-ups.

Mr. Aumack: So what was your degree as?

Mr. May: Well, it was an art major with a business and speech minor. I can teach business and speech from seven to twelve, and art K to twelve. My first job was as an art supervisor, but I really love teaching. And I love working with the kids, and not just doing demonstration lessons. I decided I wanted a class for myself. So I applied for jobs in elementary education, but even with all those credits, I didn't have elementary certification. But I got a job in Bergen County, in Glenn Rock, one of the best schools in the state. I taught in Glenn Rock for two or three years, even though they said you'll never get into Glenn Rock because there was such a wait line and it's such a wonderful system. You'll never get in there. And I didn't have certification. With all certification I had, I didn't have elementary certification. But they were extremely professional. They didn't just look at

credentials, and so on and so forth, they interviewed me, and then they came down and they watched me teach, and not only the principal, but the curriculum coordinator, and so on. They paid Wall Township for the day for me to come up to look at their system so that I would make sure that I was making the right decision. They took me around the district, introduced me to the superintendent, took me out to lunch, and had an extremely professional way of handling it. And even without certification I got the job. But I had to get elementary certification, which I did. I was there two years, but when you get the sand in your shoes, you just can't leave the shore, and I just wanted to come home. They were so delighted with me. I'll never forget they called me in to the office. There was the superintendent, the principal, and the curriculum coordinator. Although I'd taught there only two, maybe three years, they offered me the job of principal. This was before there were contracts for teachers. They could do what they wanted, and offer the salaries that they wanted. But they called me in and said that they were offering me the job of principal. They were offering me the job of principal of their junior high, and they would pay for all of my masters degree for certification in administration. They groomed you for the position, it was like a picture book, the way they ran that system. The current principal was leaving in two years, and I would take over the school in two years. I was flattered. And it's funny how some things you remember. I remember saying to them, "You know, I don't want you to feel that I'm ungrateful, but I got in this business to teach, and I don't want to leave the classroom." It was such an emotional thing to be offered this position with all expenses paid, and then to turn it down, but I had said when I leave, I'll leave the classroom. And I did. I left there in a year and I came back home. Then I taught in a ghetto school for three years.

Mr. Aumack: What do you mean a ghetto school?

Mr. May: Well, I couldn't understand why I wasn't getting calls, because there was a teacher shortage then, but I wasn't getting calls from the districts that I applied to down here. I didn't plan to go back to Glenn Rock. I told them that I loved teaching and I called the borough, and they said, "What grade level are you interested in?" And I said, "Do you have anything available?" And they said, "Yes, but what grade?" They said, "We can't find your application, but why don't you come in for an interview?" I went in. Dr. Clausen was the superintendent; he was one of the best that I've worked with, and I've worked with the lot, the good, bad, and the ugly. But he was there, and he interviewed me, and he offered me the job. I was delighted now that I had a job here. What I didn't realize then was that I wasn't in Freehold Township, I was in the Boro, and I was in the ghetto school that has since been torn down. It was built in 1865 Hudson Street school in Freehold; the new addition went up in 1916. And to join those two additions was a hallway. The place leaked; it had horrible conditions. I had left Glenn Rock, which was Utopia, our playground was by Nabisco, you had the smell of the fresh cookies and so on, we had a huge playground to play in. On my first day of school in Freehold, they didn't even tell me where my room was. I asked the teachers where my room was. I had no room. I wound up teaching in the hall that

joined the two schools. Then I looked out the window in the back, and I said, "Where's the playground?" They said, "You're looking at it; it used to be a mudhole." They had blacktopped it over. They were three unbelievable years. I probably would have stayed there, because I love teaching kids, but the board administration was so corrupt in that district at that time, it was incredible. The man who had hired me went on to Basking Ridge, and he was only there one or two years, and then they hired someone who was just a hatchet man to get rid of the teachers there. That was where I became involved with teaching leadership.

Mr. Aumack: When did you come to Freehold Boro school?

Mr. May: About 1968. In 1968 a law was passed that teachers could negotiate contracts; before that time, they didn't. And I was in my third year of teaching, I was not tenured, and I wasn't really involved with the profession. I don't know why, but they asked me if I would write the original contract there, and another teacher and I sat down and wrote it. It was sixty some pages. And with that, I was offered another principalship in the sleaziest manner possible in Freehold Boro. The superintendent who was there at that time, came to my area. I had tried to make the room look nice, but it had these huge ceilings that leaked water down the blackboard. I brought in all kinds of flowers and plants, and had them in the back windows. I was teaching the kids when he came and said he wanted to talk to me. He said he had heard about my working on this contract. I wasn't presenting it or anything, I was just writing it. And he told me, "Obviously you're a teacher leader in this district." Well, I never thought of myself as a leader there, I was just writing this contract. And he said, "I want you to know you have it made in this district and if you play it my way." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "I have a principalship coming up that you can have, but you've got to get rid of that contract." So in other words, you screw the teachers and then you've got a principalship. That was basically his offer. I blew up. I said, "I can't believe your offer." I almost threw him out and he was the superintendent. He said, "You'll do it my way or else." I said, "I'll take the or else because I'll be damned if I do it your way. I can't believe you'd even suggest something like that to me." I knew it was over. And I hadn't taught too many years or in too many places. But I had teachers come to bat to help me. One was having a really good second year, and he really appreciated the work. I said, "You keep your mouth shut, you'll only get yourself in trouble trying to stand up for me and the others too." I was fired from that district, but I made them fire me. Because I had three years of teaching, I would not sell out, and so I knew the gig was up. He called me in to talk, I remember it was at lunchtime. I had to go into his office, and he said, "There's no reason to give you a contract because you don't plan to stay with us." I said, "Oh, but there is." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because I deserve one. I've worked damn hard in this district for three years with these kids and gone over and above board. I deserve a contract." Then all of a sudden he began to find fault with my teaching. I said, "What's wrong with my teaching?" He said, "Well, for instance the way you teach reading." I said, "What don't you like about the way I teach reading?" The year before he had offered me the reading specialist

position in the district, but I happened to be in Europe at the time, and they needed to hire somebody immediately. I knew that, he had told me that. They were just making things up to find a reason not to give me a contract. I said, "Look, in your position, you can take the best teacher and make him look rotten." And he said, "You know that." I said, "I know that, and you know that too." Well, in his office, he got so angry with me that he jumped up and took off and left me sitting in his office. So then I forced him: if he didn't give me a contract, he had to fire me. So he fired me, and I went to the New Jersey Education Association for assistance. I had applied to five districts, and I know every one of them today, because contracts was such a sensitive issue at that time. But what he was doing was union busting, and it had nothing to do with New Jersey Education Association, it had to do with labor unions. It was kind of like 1916, when leaders of the union were fired, and therefore the union had little power. But I had the teacher's rights fund at my disposal to sue them. And NJEA worked very closely with me, and we were doing it. If he did this to me, he'd be doing it to other teachers, so I figured I wasn't going to let that happen. In the meantime, I applied to five different districts. I had gotten five contracts in those districts even though he was blackballing me. In fact, the principal in Little Silver sat down with me, and was telling me what went on behind the scenes. They wanted to hire me immediately in Little Silver, but I had been blackballed by the Freehold superintendent. And this superintendent didn't know how he was going to get my appointment through the board, and he didn't want me to sign somewhere else. So he sent the principal to Basking Ridge. Remember I told you the superintendent at Basking Ridge was really good? The principal went up there under the guise that the Little Silver school was looking into the math program at Basking Ridge. So then, just casually, he said, "By the way, we had this candidate come in, Phil May. What do you think of him?" He said, "Let me tell you, Basking Ridge being the kind of district it is, I don't have any openings here. But if he were to come in here for a job, I'd find one." So the principal got on the phone, called, and I got the contract in Little Silver. I got a contract in all five districts. I don't know how I got the contracts, because when they interviewed me, they asked the questions. I said, "Are you finished? Now, I have questions for you. I don't want you to think I'm smart or putting you on, but I'm in one of the worst teaching situations I could ever possibly be in, and I will never be in another one." Well, then I really grilled them. I went on forever. "What kind of district do you have here, what kind of policy, etc." And even with that, I got contracts in all of them. I went to Little Silver, I grew up in Shrewsbury, so I went there. And that's where I spent the rest of my career, about twenty-five, thirty years there.

Mr. Aumack: In Little Silver?

Mr. May: In Little Silver.

Mr. Aumack: Is that school still standing there?

Mr. May: Oh, yes. I just retired a few years ago.

Mr. Aumack: What did you teach?

Mr. May: In fact, they didn't want me to retire, which was kind of nice. I taught sixth, seventh and eighth. Mostly sixth, and social studies, mostly, but I taught other things. But when I turned fifty-five, I retired. They wanted me to stay on to sixty-two at least. They said, "You're at the height of your career, you're in educational politics, on the top." I was involved with NJEA. I was on the committee that did the hiring and firing of NJEA people at the state level. I was one of the teacher representatives on that board. I had just put on two plays for the kids, *Oliver* one year, and *Annie*. And I loved the classes, I loved teaching them. They asked, "Why would you leave?" I said, "I have to leave sometime." And you really reach a point where you have so many other interests, not that I don't love teaching. I just had so many other interests. So I retired early.



Mr. May teaching sixth grade

Mr. Aumack: Are there any other stories that you can give me about the politics of education?

Mr. May: Yes. You've heard how I got involved in the politics of education through this superintendent, but I didn't learn my lesson, because when I got to Little Silver, Little Silver had no contract, and they had said they would never have a contract because it's just not the way to do things. Now you don't work without a contract. But then having a contract was considered terrible and unprofessional. In other words, you take what the board gives you. So I guess I had just gotten on tenure, and they asked me to be on the negotiating committee. I'd never been on a negotiating committee, I'd just written a contract, but I knew that wasn't the way it was supposed to work. I went in there and there were three teachers. The teacher chairing it goes in to the superintendent with the agenda, and said, honest to God, it was like whispering, and the superintendent says, "This one I can take care of, that one might be a possibility, this one, no don't bring that up, it would only upset them, now this one I can take care of." And he'd go through and he'd cut out all things on he didn't want to address, and all you had were the things that were nothing things. And I thought, "I can't believe this." So we went through that year. The following year we had a strange set of circumstances. The superintendent died. One of the two principals in the district, and the one who was real aggressive, takes over like a superintendent, and he wants us to go in to him even though he is just the principal. They hadn't hired a superintendent, and he wanted us to go in with what we were proposing to him. And I wouldn't do it. First of all, he wasn't the superintendent. And so, I write up the original contract again. Sixty some pages again. Two other teachers were on that committee; I wasn't head of the negotiating committee, the other one was. I

was dropping out if they didn't present a formal contract. We got right to the wire. We wrote the contract, had all the language, but we needed it typed up, and this was their out. Because they didn't have anybody to type it, they weren't going to look at it. Well, I had a law secretary who was a friend of mine type the contract. Then I got in touch with NJEA. The head of negotiations said, "I really want to do this, but we just can't get it typed and get all the stuff done." That was her out. So I showed up that night with the representative from NJEA and the contract typed, and I said, "You're going to be delighted, I was able to get the contract typed, we have this and we're going in." The board didn't want to talk to us, they didn't even want to touch the contract. John Malloy, who represented us, stated, "It's just a contract, it's negotiated between the two of you, it's an agreement of working conditions, it's nothing to be afraid of, just look at what it says in the first page. Look what it says in the first page." I'm watching him, because I knew what he was doing. Well, they were curious, so they open it up. Well, once they opened it up, they were negotiating. We worked out the original contract, so I guess I negotiated the original contract there in Little Silver about twenty, twenty-one years ago. Then I was involved with the county and the state and even nationally in education politics, and in Little Silver, I could do negotiations or I could do grievances for Little Silver. They were afraid if I were president I'd have them out on strike. Things got really bad one year, really bad; the teachers didn't have an agreement, they didn't know what to do, so they came to me, saying "Would you take the presidency?" That was in June, and the following September we were out on strike. But we never had to do it again. It was one of those times when we just couldn't come to an agreement. They never thought the teachers in Little Silver would do such a thing. I told them we were doing it. I said, "We're not going to work without a contract, we're just not going to do it." I really feel that even through all that, I had the utmost respect from most of the board members, the administrators, and the superintendents.

Mr. Aumack: Why were they so against these contracts?

Mr. May: Because they were a threat. School boards, administrators, and superintendents could do whatever they wanted without them. In Glenn Rock, the first school I taught at, I was the fair-haired boy. They wanted me to be a principal. But if we had been under contract, you can't just single out one and send him or her for all this special treatment, paid classes and all. Contractual benefits in that area will pay up to maybe six credits a year. These things you have to negotiate in, you all have to agree. That's why they were against contracts -- because it's power. Without contracts you had nothing to say. They had full power over you and the district. But when you put it on an equal playing field, where the boards and the teachers hammer out a contract that's mutually agreed upon, it gives the teachers, or any organization, certain rights. Our big problem over the years has been not having the right to strike. We can strike, but the board can get an injunction to have us go back. So you have the right to strike, but you can't use it. And that's the bottom line, the board of education knows that and knows that the teachers are going to be like the first group in

Freehold, that that situation in Freehold is what got me involved with county leadership. Those strikers got the worst sentences, I think, in the history of state educational politics. The teachers went on strike; it was a bitter strike, and they were going to make a lesson of those six, ten people, whatever it was, including the union president. He got six months in jail. I mean it's hard to believe just for not working. I went to college with one of the women, and that's what really got me involved personally. She was one of the negotiators and they threw the book at her. I don't know what they got, six weeks, whatever the term was, but just to make it more embarrassing, she had to have surgery while she was in jail. Well, when they took her from the county jail, they put her with the worst criminals, they took her from the county jail to the doctor in a paddy wagon, handcuffed. Not a nice scene. So she had the scars from that, and she always will. She was able to overcome a lot. And she wasn't the only one, they all got it. The men had it the easiest. They were allowed to teach the inmates. But the women, and this one particular one I went to school with, were not. She had had a big student, a Black girl, in one of her classes, and when she first had this student in class she was kind of scared of her, because this woman is small, and this young girl was big. She had had one child at thirteen or fourteen, another one at fifteen by an uncle, and she was tough. Well, when Lynn went to jail, they put her in a cell with this student. Lynn was petrified as to what would happen to her. But as it turned out, the girl happened to like Lynn, and saw that no one hurt her while she was in there. But it could have been the other way around. That was what they did. The right to strike is still an issue, because the boards can get an injunction, and if you continue to stay out you're subject to all sorts of fines, jail, and so on. So all the board has to do is hang on long enough, and drive you to the wall. You're not going to win. It's like boxing with one hand behind your back.

Mr. Aumack: All right, let's talk about Asbury Park.

Mr. May: Asbury Park? As a child growing up I went there to the amusements and to the business district. We went shopping in the business district, maybe once a month with my mother and father, if you could get him to come down and do some shopping. In the summer time, the boardwalk was unbelievable. My mother and father would bring us down there for fireworks, for the rides, or for whatever. Not for swimming; we always went to Seabright to swim because Seabright was the closest beach. But for the special boardwalk, Asbury Park was it. And the Monte Carlo pool. I mean they had the best of everything there in Asbury Park. Beautiful area, beautiful homes, well-kept, nice city, as far as stores and commercial area. But when I got into my first year of teaching, which was in Wall Township, I rented a house here in Ocean Grove. I had always had ties here in the Grove, but I was never here very much. I came to visit. But during my first year of teaching, I rented a house over on Embury Avenue, and was here for that year. I used to cross over the bridge to work. I used to walk to work, because the gift shop I had a job at was in Asbury, right across the street from Steinbachs. During that time the Monmouth Mall had opened up. The mall was the first thing that really dented the business district of Asbury Park. I remember Mom driving

around and around forever, looking for a parking place, but when the mall opened up, you had all the parking you wanted, and also the big stores. So Asbury Park lost a tremendous amount of business when the mall opened. But what happened next really finished Asbury off, and that was the race riots. There was a sort of like ghetto type area here on Springwood Avenue. Lake Avenue goes into Springwood Avenue. There was a section there that had stores and so on, but they also had prostitution and drugs, and all kinds of things going on that street. I never really got beyond the first or second store, but I knew that those things were going on. Springwood Avenue goes into West Lake Avenue, too. At one time, they changed the name of it. But then they went back to the original, and I see as I went down that road a week or so ago, it's Springwood Avenue. But there were a lot of Black businesses as well as White, and most everything on that street was controlled by White slumlords. And they got all the money, and the area got the crime and corruption. So the African Americans who were there finally just had it up to here. There were riots all over the country in the 1970s. I was in the gift shop when the police came; it was like a police state, they'd come up, and one business after the other was leaving the area. This business that I worked for was started by German immigrants. The son was a friend of mine. He's in his eighties now, and he took over the business with a partner, and then I worked for them. So it was a business that had been in the family since the turn of the century. The police came in and told them to pull their window in every night. They had just taken over a week to put a window display in, and I remember they had this big beautiful American Eagle made in Italy. It was a Majolica type, it was gorgeous, and they had it on the turnstile, and the police come in after they had just finished and say there was a possibility of riots at any time and we suggest you pull your window in every night. It had taken them a week to put it in, and I remember the frustration of the owner: "We'll just have to take our chances, we're not pulling the window in." But after the riots, they moved out of town. I happened to have a friend of mine who was African American, and lived in Monroe Towers over here. The first and only time I went there for dinner happened to be the night of the big fire in Asbury Park. We were up high on Monroe Towers, which is one of the apartment buildings here, and we heard all this commotion and noise, and fire trucks, and we went out on his porch. He had a porch overlooking this. We literally watched them burn Springwood Avenue. I mean the fire started, and they tried to contain it before it got to Cookman Avenue, and they were able to, but it was just police, firemen, everywhere, and fires up and down the whole street, burning the whole place down. Black businesses and White businesses went, because once it started, everything went. So that was the demise of Asbury and now today I'm working with Asbury Park quite closely because Wesley Lake borders Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, it belongs to both. About five summers ago, it was an extremely hot summer, and nothing had been done to that lake since Asbury Park went downhill. There was no more commercial value to the swan boat, the rides, the merry-go-rounds; one by one, they just went. The lake itself has been abandoned. On a good day, the western end was about six inches. Usually it was a mud flat with garbage just strewn all over it, and this particular summer was so hot, it was just incredible.

The pondweed with all the garbage collected in it, and the rats are swimming - it was just awful here. So I started a group. I decided I was doing something about it. I was going to run for Township Committee because none of the Township Committee wanted to do anything about it, so actually I did run for Township Committee, as an Independent, on my own, and both the Democrats and Republicans wanted me to get off that ticket. They were both afraid that I would win. Attention was paid to the lake. Not so much financial, but I got appointed to the West Lake Commission. I joined that in August. They met every three months, and I had about ten motions to make. I had my three friends with me that I had started this group with. It's called The Citizens for West Lake. Now there's about five hundred. In the beginning I brought all the ones I could get to the meeting. Now I was on the commission. I had ten motions: I made the first one that we meet every month because of the severe problems we have. They said they don't have any money. And I said, "You only meet when you have money? You're not going to get any money; you may as well as not meet at all." Well, they voted that down. Then we met at five thirty, and I said, "That's not a time to have a meeting when you're really serious about doing something, because people are eating at that time." I made a motion that we meet in the evening. Well, they voted that down. My third motion was that for the next meeting, we meet at the lake site, walk around the lake, and develop short and long-range plans. Well that was it. I couldn't even get a second to that one! The mayor was running, and he was from this area, and my friends said, "You don't even care?" Well, he said, "I'll second it." Well, they voted that all down, too. And then they called the meeting off. That was my first meeting. They met again in December, and none of them showed up in December. In January, guess who was left on the committee? Me. So I had seniority, and I was chair of the committee, and we had a whole new committee of the people from both towns and I've been working with the citizens for West Lake in that group ever since. While I was chair, I made the Citizens for West Lake a subcommittee of the West Lake Commission. And then I got out as head of the Citizens for West Lake, because I'm talking to myself being both chair of the Wesley Lake Commission and the head of citizens for Wesley Lake. I'm still involved with it, still on the executive board and I'm still on the commission. We've been very successful. We dredged the Western end of the lake. Once I got a call from the state saying that an anonymous donor had donated fifty thousand dollars, telling the state to call me and find out where I wanted it used. I don't know who the person was, but it must be somebody who knew me. And that money combined with state money gave us the funds to dredge the western end, so now instead of a mud flat, it is four feet deep. They still don't take proper care of it, we're still have to be on them, but at least it is four feet deep there now. And then we have the next step planned: fountains in the center here, and on the western end. And we're moving on that. My involvement in Asbury Park over the years has been working there, and going there for the amusements and the business center, and now working on the lake here which borders the two towns.

Mr. Aumack: So it seems that you made all this work towards saving one small part of Asbury Park, and it seems that no one wanted to help.

Mr. May: Not in the beginning they didn't. But once I got the new board, I was chair of the Wesley Lake Commission for two years. Then I worked to get Asbury Park involved, so my vice-chair was from Asbury. I wouldn't take the chair without the vice-chair being from Asbury Park, and I met with him every month. He didn't make many of the meetings, but he made a lot of contributions. I met with him, we did the agenda, we got to the point where we were going out to lunch doing the agenda. Then the head of public works in Asbury Park got on the board, and it was wonderful, so I dropped out as chair. He's been the chair of the West Lake Commission now for two years. The first year he wanted me to take it. And he even tried a fast one when I called for nominations, because I was chair and nobody was going to nominate anybody so I had to stay chair. I said this wasn't going to work. So I told him I'd be vice-chair, and now I'm a member at large on the committee. As a member at large, I wasn't appointed by Neptune, I was elected by Neptune and Asbury Park to be on the commission, which was nice. I like that because both groups were interested in my staying on. So there's been a lot of support, although originally it wasn't easy to come by. Nobody was interested.

Mr. Aumack: What do you think the difference was between the second go around as opposed to the first go around? Was it just different people or different times?

Mr. May: Different people. People make the difference. They're pushing their interest. I mean the first ones were waiting for the state to give them money and then they'd spend it, that was it. And state's not giving anything, federal government wasn't giving anything, so why meet? I hate to say it, but it was like the good old boy network: it looks good on your resume to be on the Wesley Lake Commission. But it has moved forward, and we've got a very active Citizens for West Lake group and the West Lake Commission has moved forward. Then I heard about a woman who was having trouble with Exxon, out by Dunkin' Doughnuts here on the corner of 33 and 35, because they had a station there that had a gas spill, and she was complaining about a cancer cluster and so on. Well, I didn't know what a plume is, I didn't know any of this environmental jargon, but anyway, plume is the direction that this leak has taken. The gas was moving towards the lowest level, which would be Wesley Lake. Well, it would take forever for it to get here, but it was nevertheless moving in that direction. She wanted it cleaned, so I teamed up with her and we had our first march. We called it the Plume to the Flume March. So we met over there, we marched from Exxon down here with a group of people; we marched to Founders Park in Ocean Grove, and that was kind of like the turning point. Then it became fashionable to defend the lake. The mayor of Neptune has a charity ball, and they pick a charity. Where does the money go? To the Citizens of West Lake -

and we got about ten, twelve thousand dollars from that charity ball. And now people are still interested in what's happening to the lake.

Mr. Aumack: Let's go back to the race riots. Can you talk more about the causes?

Mr. May: I taught African American history for about twenty-five years. I got a federal grant when all this was going on. I started teaching in Freehold Boro in a ghetto school, and the majority of students, probably sixty to seventy percent, were African American. They had nothing in the way of African American History. There was no history, nothing for them. It wasn't like somebody told me they should be having a course in Black history, I just thought these kids should have it. I never had Black history in school, if they taught me any, I was probably daydreaming, but it would probably have been about George Washington Carver because he was a scientist and a great man, or Booker T. Washington. Booker T. Washington was a black leader who did what the white people wanted him to do. I'm not saying he was a sell out, because at that time he was able to accomplish a great deal for his people. But he had to agree that races should be segregated. He agreed with that. But I would get a book, it was called *Proudly We Hail*. I would read to the kids when we had a lull. I'd read about a famous Black person, and so on. Where I grew up it was all White in Shrewsbury. I taught to Little Silver, it was all White, too. Red Bank, where I went to high school, is mixed, so when we went to high school it was mixed. But we never had Black History in Shrewsbury, and I came from the same kind of district. And so I applied for a grant to teach Black History. I developed a ten week unit that I taught every year on African American history. You ask, what caused the race riots, there were many things, but it was simply that enough was enough. It was the right time and the right leadership. If you didn't have a Martin Luther King there leading and other people like him, then I don't know whether the Civil Rights movement would have taken off then. The segregation issue would have taken off eventually. It had been an issue for years, but it was like the right time, the right moment, the right leaders, to do this. President Harry S. Truman was the one who really started the idea of integration. During World War II, there were the Black units and the White units. The races were not even mixed in the military. But President Truman integrated the armed forces. As president of the United States he could do that. So that integration in the armed forces was a step. And then in 1954 the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision came out and was supposed to end segregation in schools. And meanwhile the right wing bigots were fighting integration in the military, fighting the school integration in all kinds of ways. Governor Wallace was trying to say we're not going to integrate the schools here in Alabama, but in 1963 the Civil Rights Act was passed and that ended the segregation in everything. It's interesting that all three branches were involved: one was a presidential decision, one was a Supreme Court decision, and the other was by vote of Congress. The Civil Rights Act passed. So you had all three branches working on this, but that didn't mean the people wanted to integrate. So then came the fight. You had the laws and the books, but

then you had the fight for the integration. And that created the riots, and sit-ins, and wade ins. The beach between Asbury Park and in Ocean Grove is not a common beach. I think it belongs to Asbury, I'm not really quite sure, but there's a beach at the end of Wesley Lake, that was a "Black beach," that's where blacks could swim. But that's also where the sewers emptied into. With the civil rights movement there were many, many new ideas and laws, and of course, they triggered the riots. And you had the leadership. It wasn't just Martin Luther King. Black leadership started in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, but now it had the legislature and decisions, and the leadership to implement Civil Rights. That is the race riots as I see it.

Mr. Aumack: Was there a growth of African Americans moving into Asbury Park?

Mr. May: Blacks had been there for many years. Asbury was a very wealthy city, and it needed workers in the hotels and the homes and so on, and Blacks were there, just as they were in Glenn Rock in Bergen county. I wasn't even aware of that because it was not my neck of the woods. And in Red Bank, the same way, the Blacks were literally on the other side of the tracks. And I'm sure since then there has been an influx because as people move out, more move in, and the Blacks are in Asbury more and more.

Mr. Aumack: Let's talk about Ocean Grove. Tell us about the Pine Tree Inn.

Mr. May: In teaching it's not true that you get paid twelve months a year. You get paid ten, and you're unemployed for two. So you look for another job or spread your money out over twelve months. I had taught summer school and those things. I've always had ties here in Ocean Grove and I liked it enough that I really wanted to buy something here, but I had a home up in Tinton Falls on Sycamore Avenue. I thought it would be different to have a bread and breakfast rather than teaching summer school every year. I always like to try new things. So I thought I'd try a bed and breakfast see how that worked out. The Pine Tree Inn came up for sale and my partner and I purchased it, but I ran it during the summer. And I started the inn. The woman we bought it from had a dinner at the end of the season on Labor Day weekend. She invited my partner and me to meet the people who were there. One lady with her cane came over. She was ninety years old, and she said, "I hear you went to Montclair." And I said, "Yes, I did." And she said, "I went there, too." I said, "What year did you graduate?" And she said, "I graduated in 1911." I said, "1911; that was the first class!" She said, "Yes I was in the first class that graduated from Montclair." And it turns out that she and her two sisters were great nieces of President Cleveland. They were actually those three and their brother. But the brother didn't come with them. But one sister was ninety, one was eighty-eight, and the other was eighty-six. And the last time they came to the Inn they were about ninety-six, ninety-four, and ninety-two. And the brother was still alive in his late eighties. They were wonderful guests. I ran the hotel summers, then, because I love doing places over, I did the whole thing

over, and, in fact the place was in *Country Living* after I finished it. I sold the place in Tinton Falls and I moved to the Pine Tree Inn. Now I was back living in the Grove again, always getting involved in things. I was on the Executive Board of the Historical Society at the time and I also had my real estate license in town, and I also had, since I had the hotel, membership to the Hotel Association. I was treasurer of the Hotel Association and in fact one of the founders of the Chamber of Commerce - founded the Chamber of Commerce in this town. I founded the Citizens of West Lake Group, too. So I had the Inn for about seven years, and the problem is, I'm not an absentee landlord and I had problems. I never had a break and was working fourteen months a year because in the fall I was starting the school year off and closing the hotel which is like double work, and in the spring I was opening up the hotel and closing out the school year. So it was like round the clock work. I wanted to make a private home out of it, but I thought so much of the guests I didn't really want to tell them they can't come anymore, so I sold the hotel and I moved to Interlaken. Interlaken is just a mile from Ocean Grove; it's on the other side of Asbury Park, a lovely community. But in many ways afterwards I wished I had kept the Pine Tree because the new owners were terrible, and the guests never came back again after they came back that year and left early. Interlaken was wonderful, but the Grove is really unique. It not only is a National Historic Site, it's between two lakes, Wesley Lake, that I'm on, and Fletcher Lake on the South end, and the Ocean to the east. So it's a very small area, about a half a square mile, but a tremendous amount of the work here is done by volunteers. There are many different volunteer groups in town. And when you come from this kind of environment and you go to Interlaken where everything is just wonderful but was also kind of boring compared to Ocean Grove, so I bought this beat up old house in Ocean Grove. I did it over, I furnished it, but I never lived in it, never even spent a night in it, but I had it on the Christmas house tour, etc. People used to call it my doll house. Eventually I sold it, and then this place came up for sale, and what I liked about this was the size of the property. Ocean Grove was like house, alleyway, house, and alleyway all very close. But this house had property, and it was a big house. I was just going to buy it; I still wasn't going to leave Interlaken, and I was just going to buy it, make some changes, and then resell it. Well, I got into it; I designed the whole thing, did the whole thing over, put in new ceilings, did the wallpaper, and everything, even the kitchen and the bathroom. And I moved in. I was no sooner back in the Grove when I was asked to take over the presidency of the Historical Society. And meanwhile I was president of my local in education. Local presidency of all the educational things is very difficult, because you're negotiating contracts, you're negotiating salary, doing some work with salaries, grievances, and so on and so forth. So I was president of the local, I was president of the county, and I had ten thousand members, and I was president of one or two other things, I had five other groups, and then they were asking me to be president of this historical society. I said, "Well, I want to know everything that happened since I left." Anyway, I took it. You could only serve a limited term, two years. Anyway, they changed the constitution and I've been the president ten years. And it's election year and I'm still trying to find somebody else to take it.

But anyway, when I took it over, we were a little hole in the wall behind the bank over in town. The place took every bit of money we had to rent it, and we couldn't even put our stuff in it. We made a move here probably about five years ago. We moved into the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association lobby, because they had a CEO there who they had hired who was really good and interested in community involvement. They put out a notice to all the organizations that if they'd like to be a part of, or have a desk in the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association office so that they could work together on common issues. No one responded but me. I didn't want a desk and phone, I wanted the whole lobby plus a desk and a phone, and I got it. And then about four years ago, we bought a collection. We had to take the whole collection, and a lot of it had nothing to with Ocean Grove. It was Asbury Park stuff, Avon, you know, shore community things, but we had to buy the whole thing, and it was very expensive; it was around thirteen thousand dollars. And we had no place to store it, and really had no museum of our own. We were saving to buy a museum, and if we spent the money, we wouldn't have it for the museum. I had the deciding vote; it was nine to nine, so I had to break the tie, and I said, "Only if we buy it, we get rid of everything that has nothing to do with Ocean Grove." So we had an auction. Incidentally, that auction was the first of several. We just had our fourth annual auction last week. That first one was really a hoot because I did the auctioneering, and I had never done that. But we made twelve to thirteen thousand dollars. We made enough to pay for the whole collection and we have what we wanted out of it. If you go out past the auditorium, you'll see the historical society straight ahead of you. When the building came up for sale, it was a kite shop and filthy and run down. The basement was so littered with debris and garbage and busted bricks and dirt that they thought it was a dirt floor. It took six months to negotiate the deal, but we did. Then we didn't have any money to fix it up. We only had about three or four thousand dollars, and that was only enough to clean the rugs and paint and put all our stuff in. And the rugs were awful. So I put out an appeal to friends and members, and so on, to be a founder of the new museum. If they give twenty-five to ninety-nine dollars, they'd get on this list, and so on and so forth. And I was very fortunate, because the executive board voted that whatever money we got we could use it to put the museum together. So I didn't have to go back to them for each expenditure. Well, the money came in and although I had never done fundraising before, we took in about fifty thousand dollars. The museum now looks wonderful. Not only upstairs, but downstairs as well. We have a new cooling system, and a gallery. So that has been my involvement with the historical society. Now we're involved with the end of Main Avenue where there was a statue called the Angel of Victory statue that was put up in 1878 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Monmouth. This was kind of interesting because the Civil War had just ended and Ocean Grove was only nine years old. The statue was ten feet and the base was eight feet. In 1922 it had troubles with the metals it was made of. The lead corroded within itself and it collapsed in a storm or something. So anyway, recreation of this statue is something that we'd like to. We can't restore it, but we'd like to recreate it. That's one of the main projects we're working on now. But

as you can see, I'm very much involved with the town here. And what are some other questions that you have?

Mr. Aumack: What's happening in Ocean Grove now?

Mr. May: Well, Ocean Grove is really on an upswing. Maybe we should go back to when the gates were taken down. Ocean Grove was set up by the members of the Methodist Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church and it was an Ocean Grove Camp Meeting association. They purchased this tract of land here, and of course the religious laws went into effect. And Sunday was the day to worship so when it started out, no horse carriages were allowed in this town on Sunday. They had to be out of sight. Not only couldn't they be used, they had to be out of sight. So they had barns to put them in. Well, and then the same law was applied to anything with wheels, such as bicycles. You couldn't use anything with wheels. Of course when cars came in, cars had to be out of town on Sunday, too. It was really unique. When I had the hotel, it was hard to explain to somebody because it was like a whole community with cars that you can't see! Saturday nights I would take my guests over to Asbury Park to a parking garage where they'd park their cars. Then I'd bring them back, then I'd take my car over, park it, and I'd walk in. And from Saturday night at midnight to Sunday night at midnight there were no cars in this town. And no bicycles. A court case that came up that involved delivery of newspapers. The town had made a special exception for newspaper delivery vehicles to come in at four in the morning to deliver papers, and someone complained about it, saying they shouldn't be in here because they have cars. The courts were just waiting for that case to come up, and they threw the book at Ocean Grove, saying that everything they were doing was wrong from start to finish, violating separation of church and state, and that they can no longer keep vehicles out of Ocean Grove on Sundays, and that I could understand. But then they went so far as to assign us to Neptune, even though we were our own community here, run by the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association. Now the courts should have at least let us form our own community here. Instead they assigned us to Neptune and Ocean Grove became a part of Neptune. We had a big town meeting. I was new kid on the block then, because I had only had the Pine Tree Inn about a year, and I didn't know whether they'd run me out of the place or not, but I made the motion that we break away and form our own community here. And it passed overwhelmingly. Then we started the campaign with signatures, and the whole bit. Then we had another group that kind of undermined us here in town that was going to stay with Neptune, and thought Neptune was going to honor everything in the Grove. They weren't, though they said they were. So that issue was a whole historical controversy here. Eventually the property values went up after the town opened up. We didn't know what they'd do, but they went up. About ten years later, real estate in general plummeted, and in the Grove in particular they really went down. These old hotels became outpatient centers for slumlords who filled every room with people recovering from some mental or emotional disorder. The slumlords didn't take care of these people, didn't give them medication, and they'd wander the

streets aimlessly. It was really a bad situation in the Grove. But now it's really on the upswing. We've gotten rid of most of those places that were abusing these people and just milking them for every penny that they could get from the state, and you'll see restoration going on all over town.

Mr. Aumack: What would you like to say to Monmouth County residents who are reading or hearing this recording?

Mr. May: Monmouth County has such a rich history. I would tell them that they should get involved in preserving the heritage that we have here. Right from the start of our country, we were at the crossroads of the Revolution. I would also say that New Jersey is one of the greatest states, too. I mean I'm retired now, and I'm thinking, "I could make a move," but every time I sit down to seriously think about it, I can't think of any place that would be better than New Jersey, and Monmouth County in particular. You're an hour from New York, you're an hour and a half from Philadelphia. You want to go to Boston, it's six hours, and you can make it in a day. Washington, D.C., if you left here at six in the morning you could be there by ten in the morning. You can go all over. I also do a lot of antique shows. And in this area here, you can go from North Jersey, South Jersey, you know, East, West, it's just a wonderful location for antiques, too. It's a state that people love to make fun of, but at the same time, New Jersey is one of the wealthiest states in the country. It is either the first or second wealthiest state in the country. And people love living here. You can make fun of it, but the statistics speak for themselves as far as what it has to offer.

Mr. Aumack: How has Ocean Grove changed, and how has Asbury Park changed?

Mr. May: Well, Asbury Park has really made a tremendous change. It went from one of the best boardwalks that we have in the state, probably second only to Atlantic City, really down. The Monte Carlo Pool was the largest salt-water pool in the world, and it no longer exists. And the business district, and the beautiful homes are decaying. I mean it is run down, completely run down. The lake here, which was so beautiful, I don't know where to begin over there. Asbury Park and Ocean Grove used to be called the Twin Cities, because they were founded by the same people. Ocean Grove was founded about ten years earlier. Because of its small size, the fact that the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association has never left has contributed to Ocean Grove's upswing. It was about twenty years ago that court decision came out. It was only twenty years ago that you had to have your cars out of here; we're not talking ancient history. The Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association kept up the auditorium and their buildings. There is not an Ocean Grove police force, but there is a citizens patrol that was formed here. I'm on that too. Unfortunately I don't have much time to devote to it. And I wasn't one of the founders of it. But volunteers go out from nine at night until three in the morning in old police cars, called the Citizens Patrol, and they just drive in the streets. They can't arrest anybody, but if they see something going

on, they can let the Neptune police know. The citizen's patrol was formed because we had so many problems years ago. We don't have as many as we did; but there were break ins, robberies, and so on. We also have a beautification committee, which does a lot of the work the township should be doing with our parks. They do the plantings and so on. The historical society takes care of the historical artifacts, and provides the museum for the town. The Fishing Club doesn't just concern itself with the fishing on the pier, they do community things, too. The Chamber of Commerce is involved with a lot of things. There's over twenty-five groups in this little town. The same people are on different groups, that's why you hear me saying I'm on this and that group. There is a crossover of people into different groups for different causes.

Mr. Aumack: I think that's a great place to stop, so thank you very much.

Mr. May: My pleasure.