



## Interview with William Kresge

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Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

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**Name of Interviewer(s):** Rhoda Newman and Kevin Chambers

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

**Birthdate of Subject:** June 3, 1920

**Ms. Newman:** Mr. Kresge, tell us how you first came to Ocean Grove.

**Mr. Kresge:** My father, Homer D. Kresge, was with The New York Times, working on the mid-week pictorials and the rotogravure sections. He decided that he would like to have his own newspaper and looked along the Jersey coast as he thought the shore would be good for his wife and five children, and in 1925 he purchased The Ocean Grove Times, moving there from their home in Cranford.

**Ms. Newman:** What were your first impressions as a child?

**Mr. Kresge:** My first impression was as a five-year-old boy, and I can't remember that too well. But I do remember having a wonderful childhood; it was a good place for children, excellent place for a family. I can begin with the fact that Ocean Grove was a small community at that time, because in the winter there were probably only twenty-five hundred people. Of course in the summer, we had up to forty thousand or more. They say even as high as fifty thousand, but I don't know about that.

**Mr. Chambers:** Where did you go to elementary school?

**Mr. Kresge:** I went to the Ocean Grove Elementary School, Neptune High School, and Bucknell University, graduating in 1941, when I joined the Navy flight

program. But going back to childhood impressions, I recall when all of the town's streets were dirt. Water wagons would sprinkle to control the dust and the children in bathing suits would follow and enjoy the spray.

**Ms. Newman:** Do you remember when the streets were paved?

**Mr. Kresge:** The concrete streets, which came first, were Main and Ocean Avenues, and they were paved by the Fred McDowell Company, Neptune, in the winter of 1930. My father and others used to joke that these were the only roads in New Jersey that weren't paved with graft. The kids used to chew the tar used in the expansion strips and I remember putting it in my pocket, which my mother later cut out to sew in a new pocket. I had a rash on my leg which I thought came from the tar, but it turned out to be scarlet fever. I was then in the sixth grade, and I was kept out of school for a long spell. We were quarantined, and my brother and sisters were out of the house, staying with friends. Another memory was walking to the South End beach during the summer, carrying my lunch in a paper bag, and bathing in front of a family friend, lifeguard, and Newark teacher, Otto Stoll.

**Mr. Chambers:** Where in Ocean Grove did you live at the time?

**Mr. Kresge:** At first we lived at 134 Main Avenue, next door to Arthur Seger and his family. He owned a well-known sporting goods store in Asbury Park and became a founding partner of the Casino Amusement Company, which installed and operated the boardwalk rides and miniature golf.

**Ms. Newman:** Were you as a child or a teenager involved in your father's newspapers?

**Mr. Kresge:** As a child I was always involved because I couldn't get a nickel or dime to go to a movie unless I went down and swept the office first. You know how it was in those years, you had to have chores, things to do, because they didn't give allowances; that was unheard of. Everybody had to work for a little bit of money, whatever.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now that was in the old Times building.

**Mr. Kresge:** The first Times building was at 48 Main. And you know there's a little coffee shop in that part on the right; that was our office. In the back was part of the printing plant and on the second floor was the other part of the printing plant. The front part on the left towards East was the Woolston real estate agency. But in the thirties, my father purchased the building at 64 Main that was the Times building until it was sold to Dr. Dale Whilden, a dentist.

**Ms. Newman:** How did the town change?

**Mr. Kresge:** How did the town change? It was more of a resort community, centered on the Camp Meeting Association's summer programs and activities, designed for recreation, spirituality, culture, and health. The major part of the community included seasonal hotels, guest houses, and cottages. As for year-round residents, many were commuters to the better paying jobs in North Jersey and New York City.

**Mr. Chambers:** By train, up to New York.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. Train to New York or Newark.

**Ms. Newman:** You worked at the newspaper and then you went into the Navy?

**Mr. Kresge:** I was a fighter pilot in the Navy, I was based on carriers. I had one interesting experience when I was in the Pacific on a carrier, I landed on USS Wasp, and I was down in the ready room getting a cup of coffee, and somebody comes up, slaps me in the back, "Bill Kresge, what are you doing here?" And it was Jimmy Ferris from Ocean Grove who was chaplain of the Wasp.

**Ms. Newman:** Did you see action?

**Mr. Kresge:** I've got to say no. I was a basic flight instructor, then taught instrumental flying, and then served on patrol duty in the Atlantic, and then I was part of a night attack carrier air group for the invasion of Japan when the war ended. By the time I got in the Pacific that was over and the Japanese were pretty well subdued.

**Ms. Newman:** At that point did you take over working with your father?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, I worked with him. He said, "I'm not going to take any less money, Bill, whatever you get you'll have to earn." My older brother had turned down the offer and so I said I would try it. I didn't know, I was thinking about maybe going to law school, but I got involved because I had a wife and child. I had married Alice Haines. Her father and mother owned the Majestic Hotel.

**Ms. Newman:** What year was that?

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, we were married in 1942. We met in the summer, 1941, and then I went in the service and then Pearl Harbor came, so after I finished Pensacola, I came back here and we were married.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you meet her in Ocean Grove?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you remember where?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, coming out of the Ocean Grove Auditorium. See, I was an usher at the time, and coming out of the auditorium walking up Ocean Pathway, I saw this attractive girl walking down the sidewalk. I needed a date for the usher's banquet, but more than that, I'd been looking at her for quite a while, you know what I mean. And so I was determined right then and there to go over and introduce myself. We became acquainted, and that was it.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did she go to the banquet with you?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now, what were the banquets like?

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, they were nice dressy social affairs for all age groups, the young ushers with their dates and the older ushers with their wives.

**Ms. Newman:** Where were they held?

**Mr. Kresge:** They were held at the North End hotel in the dining room. They were nice affairs.

**Ms. Newman:** For people who aren't familiar with Ocean Grove, could you describe the Auditorium?

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, it's the great auditorium, but we didn't call it that in those days. It's a wonderful structure, I'd say the only one of its kind dedicated to religion and culture in the United States of America. And that's what I would say. I used to say that it is the powerhouse of Ocean Grove, because without that powerhouse we would be Bradley Beach, Farmingdale, or any other place. It is the powerhouse, it is the focal point, it is the central point, it is what makes Ocean Grove distinct from any other community. And when I say the auditorium, I mean the program, the religious and the cultural. I wouldn't know how to describe it any better than that.

**Ms. Newman:** It is a wooden structure? The present building was built in 1894, right?

**Mr. Kresge:** The only changes are some rehabilitation, and maybe the addition of a sprinkler system, and the improvement of the power supply so they can use it for TV and so on. But that was done, and you've got to give credit for these improvements to Dr. George Fly Stoll. He's been a wonderful leader as far as the rehabilitation of Ocean Grove.

**Ms. Newman:** To get back to meeting your wife, her family owned what?

**Mr. Kresge:** They owned the Majestic Hotel, from about 1922 or 1923 until 1972, something around there. And by the way, I built this house we're in in 1947. Bought the land, this was Camp Meeting association land. I paid seven hundred dollars for the corner lot and five hundred dollars for the next lot. So I paid twelve hundred dollars to the Camp Meeting association for this land. And then I started building the house. I've lived here ever since. I added a wing and central air conditioning.

**Ms. Newman:** So when you joined the paper, what were the kinds of news stories that you covered in those days?

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, basically we covered the news stories of Ocean Grove and Neptune, plus family news, births, weddings, anniversaries, education, and obituaries. Today there is a difference because I don't know whether it's the papers that made the difference, or if it was the people who made the difference. Our paper would have in there practically a recording of when a person was born, his tenth birthday party, when he went to college, when they come home for vacations, the whole thing for everybody in the community. It was a community paper. People brought the news into the office.

**Ms. Newman:** Did the war have a great impact on the community with the men being called away?

**Mr. Kresge:** No. The war itself had no impact on Ocean Grove in the sense of experiencing it. They blacked out the boardwalk, things like that, but I don't think it had any impact. But the post war period had an impact to this extent that Ocean Grove had busy, crowded summers in the forties and fifties and into the early sixties. This was before lower air fares and cruises and vacationers expanded their horizons. In those years, the town was crowded with people. Today the town is crowded with cars and there's a marked difference.

**Mr. Chambers:** I take there were a lot of people who used to come down on the train from the Northern cities.

**Mr. Kresge:** Of course people came and they didn't need their car. Somebody would bring them, or they'd come in busses, trains, you know. If they did drive, they'd probably leave the car parked the whole time. Until they had to take it outside the Ocean Grove gates from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday. The reason my house is here is because we like to go out Saturday night. There were parking lots, nearby.

**Ms. Newman:** Could you talk about that a little bit more?

**Mr. Kresge:** Now you're talking about the gates, and that was a long stretch. That took a number of years from about 1975 to 1980 or 1981, something like that. The courts finally dissolved Ocean Grove as we knew it.

**Ms. Newman:** How was it as you knew it?

**Mr. Kresge:** As we knew it, it was lovely. The only problem was, as you say, the parking of automobiles, but it was always pretty much a walking community anyway. I walked to go over to the auditorium to usher in the summer and to St. Paul's Church in the winter. I didn't mind. It's healthy and the town is designed, really, to be a walking community. In those days, you had amusements, theaters, and everything in Asbury Park, and that was all within walking distance.

**Ms. Newman:** When you and your wife were dating, did you stay within the community or did you walk over to Asbury Park?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, when we'd go out, we'd go all over the shore. We were part of the whole shore community.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you ever go dancing in the casino?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, I did, but that was for big name bands. In the 1930s we used to go see Sammy Kaye down in Point Pleasant, too. But back in the thirties other big name bands came here.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you hear Fred Waring?

**Mr. Kresge:** In Ocean Grove, you mean? Oh, yes, several times.

**Ms. Newman:** So the Auditorium was used for concerts.

**Mr. Kresge:** The Auditorium has always been used for concerts, a popular platform for leading operas and other things. A cultural haven.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now are there any big time names that you remember in particular?

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, I heard Marion Anderson, back before the war. That's probably one of the earliest concerts I heard. And then I probably heard Caruso and those people, but you know I don't remember. I probably did, my mother and father enjoyed music. And then I remember Lowell Thomas, and I remember they used to have movies in the Ocean Grove Auditorium years ago.

**Ms. Newman:** Any other speakers other than Lowell Thomas that you remember having seen? Or famous preachers?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes, sure, I heard them all. We had Billy Graham a couple of times. When Billy Graham was here we were so overcrowded it overflowed into the Young People's Temple, and that was filled too. And they had it wired for amplification. And then we had conventions here. And the biggest convention,

which came probably about three times, maybe four, was the Church of the Brethren. And the Church of the Brethren would bring oh, about ten thousand people in June. The hotel people loved it, everybody loved it. And they were good. They started the helper program where they sent cows with the kids to take them to help European farmers during post-war reconstruction. And then the Presbyterian Women were here for a convention in the fifties. And the Quakers, of the Religious Society of Friends, of which my wife is a member by the way. And they were here, too, in the fifties. Maybe sixties, I don't know. But they were good years. Giovanni Martinelli came. They used to say he was as good as Caruso. Lawrence Tibbett, another Metropolitan tenor came.

**Ms. Newman:** Earlier in the twentieth century, a member of ? spoke at the Great Auditorium, and the last presidential appearance here was when Richard Nixon came in 1970. Can you describe that?

**Mr. Kresge:** President Nixon came in April of 1970. I remember going down to get as close as we could to the helicopter that landed on the Ocean Pathway.

**Ms. Newman:** Your paper, of course, covered the appearance.

**Mr. Kresge:** Sure, oh, sure. We covered that, but every paper around covered it. I used to have a notebook containing nationwide press clippings of President Al Kinley's speech in the Ocean Grove Auditorium, but it's gone. Something happened to it when I sold The Times. Things kind of disappeared, but that's beside the point. President Nixon's visit was also covered nationwide. But it was a political time, the others weren't as political, but this was a political adventure that was arranged by the Republican Party. And they were going to hold it some other place, but they didn't think it'd be large enough, and so Freeholder Harry Larrison of Ocean Grove helped them arrange for the Ocean Grove Auditorium. But Ocean Grove itself wasn't involved from a political aspect. So they could have the auditorium, but the event was sponsored by the Monmouth County Republican Party.

**Ms. Newman:** Did people throng into town to see the President?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. A lot of people came, too, when Woody Allen was here.

**Ms. Newman:** Woody Allen made a film?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. He made a film here. It was called *Stardust Memories*. And the auditorium was converted to the Stardust Hotel, and I remember printing special stationary for the Stardust Hotel and all kinds of things for the film. We also had quite a printing business, we used to print for all over the area. But that's all secondary. We're talking about Ocean Grove now.

**Ms. Newman:** We were talking about the change coming when the gates were opened on Sundays. Was there controversy at the time?

**Mr. Kresge:** At the beginning of the proposal to open the gates, yes. But as we were worn down as to patience, we could see it was a losing cause. And so the controversy dwindled down. But there was controversy at the beginning. "Nobody's going to drive in here." Some residents would lie down on the street, you know, that kind of thing. Yes, it was controversy at the beginning. It all began when the Ocean Grove Police, which never enforced traffic violations on South Main Street in the history of Ocean Grove, decided to enforce one and arrested a drunken driver. And the driver was drunk as anything, we all know that, but he got off when the courts negated Ocean Grove police power. And that's the beginning of the end. The beginning could have been earlier when a newspaper delivery truck was challenged for distribution after midnight Saturday. But his case was settled, he could deliver until two a.m. and everybody was happy, until the other case came. Opening to Sunday traffic really raised real estate values because it brought in outside investors who felt Ocean Grove properties were cheap. They converted many single family homes into apartments. I don't believe many of those apartments could pass a legality test today. Sometimes I look in a house that had been a private home, and see there are six apartments in it. But you know these things happened in that period. Zoning regulations were lax during governmental transfer to Neptune Township.

**Ms. Newman:** Did the quality of life change for the old time residents?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, I don't think the quality of life changed.

(Mrs. Kresge comes in)

**Ms. Newman:** We are curious about your courtship.

**Mrs. Kresge:** You remember that far back? Fifty-eight years, or was it just yesterday?

**Ms. Newman:** Sounds like a happy time.

**Mrs. Kresge:** Well, so far. I think we're going to make it now.

**Ms. Newman:** We were just talking about what happened when the chains came down. You were saying the quality of life didn't change either.

**Mr. Kresge:** No, the only thing is you miss certain features, but that had nothing to do with the change. The deterioration of Asbury Park had nothing to do with the change in Ocean Grove. The quality of life hasn't changed in Ocean Grove, I don't think.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now with different personalities that were in the community, were there any people who were unique or stood out more than others, anyone who was famous that actually lived here that you remember? Anybody who was really interesting that lived in the community?

**Mr. Kresge:** Howard Smith was one. I used to call him the "Scattergood Baines." Baines was a hardware merchant in the Saturday Evening Post stories. And Howard was everybody's friend.

**Mr. Chambers:** So was his son.

**Mrs. Kresge:** Young Howard. I call him Young Howard.

**Mr. Kresge:** I remember one of Fiopo, the heavyweight boxer trainers. When he lived on Heck Avenue, he used to give us instruction to try to get us kids in shape.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did he live in that small cottage with that unusual roof?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. That's where he lived. Every New Year's Day, he'd go into the ocean. I've read about the Polar Bear Club, but back then we just all called him the crazy guy in the Grove, I guess.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now this area seemed to have been like a boxing haven. There were a lot of boxers who lived in this general area. Was there a reason they used to practice in the Monmouth County area?

**Mr. Kresge:** You know where Monmouth College is? Max Bear's manager lived in the summer at the corner of Cedar and Norwood there, on the right.

**Ms. Newman:** Did they actually train there?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, they trained in Asbury Park, in an open air ring. They would give so much money to anyone who could stay in the ring.

**Mr. Chambers:** There was a boxing ring in Asbury Park?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, there was. But it was only temporary. It was only used as a training site.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you ever go over and see it?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes, we used to watch them train. And then Tony Galento, in later years. Young fellows like to see that. Anyway, with Bear, I remember Claude Newburry, the coach in Neptune, was a pretty well known fellow, and he went in the ring with Bear, but he didn't last a round. He didn't make his money.

They were sparring, you know. And then I remember more about Asbury. I remember the dance marathons.

**Mr. Chambers:** Was that in the old casino building?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, that building is gone that had the marathon in it. It was between First and Second, between Kingsley and Ocean Avenue there someplace. Red Skelton was there. That's how he got started, dance marathons.

**Mr. Chambers:** There used to be gas pumps in front of Howard's house.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, they were there. Remember the gas shortage? About twenty years ago during the gas shortage, we used to get up at four, five in the morning and go over and get in a long line for gas at Shafto's Garage at Corliss and South Main Street. The line went all around onto Railroad Avenue, now Memorial Drive.

**Ms. Newman:** That would be 1972, 1973.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes.

**Ms. Newman:** Ocean Grove was founded in 1869. Were there still some of the old timers, the original settlers, what you call the pioneers of Ocean Grove around when you came in the twenties?

**Mr. Kresge:** There probably were, but as a boy I didn't recognize them.

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you remember any different types of stores that were up on Main Avenue?

**Mr. Kresge:** There was the drug store that used to be Steven Woolley drug store, and next to that was Frank Morris photographic place. Frank did all the developing. Frank had a route to Seaside and back, or something, and people working for him all night doing film up here in Main Avenue. That's a new building there now. Then next would be Downy Flake Doughnuts. Do you remember them? The machine would be in the window, and the doughnuts would come out. They made them right in front of you. We kids used to think that was great. Then you came to Angles and Smith, hardware, plumbing, heating, and tinsmith.

**Ms. Newman:** Were there many restaurants in the town?

**Mr. Kresge:** Year 'round, no. You could hardly keep a restaurant going in the winter. But in those days you had the oceanfront in the summer, and there were restaurants. I'm just going to talk about restaurants. Hotels had dining rooms, too. There were numerous cafeterias -- Majestic, West Lake, Sampler Inn, Grand

Atlantic, Marine, and the Osborne. And as for the restaurants, you had the Wisteria, the Homestead, Barnegat Bay, and others.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you eat at most of them?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, we resided here and rarely ate out.

**Ms. Newman:** Those were mostly for tourists?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. Maybe now and then we would go out to eat, but in our younger days there were five kids, my mother and father, and you wouldn't go out to eat much.

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you remember anything about the Depression years here in Ocean Grove?

**Mr. Kresge:** The Depression years were actually happy years for kids. We didn't know any better. Everybody was poor, you know, but we didn't even realize we were poor. But I think the conservative nature came from those years. I can't believe kids today, getting the money to spend. Just can't believe it. People in our generation said, "You take your lunch to work or school." Today they spend five or ten bucks everyday going to lunch. You took a brown bag with a rubber band around it. And maybe a nickel to buy the milk. I remember kids used to say if you got ten cents you could have a big Coke today. A big Coke, a ten-cent Coke, was a rare thing.

**Mr. Chambers:** What kinds of activities did you do in the wintertime?

**Mr. Kresge:** In the winter, we boys played basketball. One place was behind the auditorium between the tents. Eddie Holl used to shoot there. His father was a cop, and they helped putting baskets there. And another place we played (you know we only had one basket) was right over here on Stockton across the street. There was also a basket at the Taylor Dairy.

**Mr. Chambers:** Taylor Dairy, was that in Ocean Grove?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, Taylor Dairy bottling plant was on South Main Street through to Lawrence Avenue.

**Mr. Chambers:** What about ice-skating?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, we ice skated on Fletcher Lake, and the fireman would spread water right on the ice at night for a glossy surface the next day. You didn't have the pollution that you have today. When I say pollution, I don't mean the real foul pollution, but I mean you have paved roads today, and the oil, itself a pollution, comes off the roads and so we don't have as much ice as we used to have. And

even when you get cold weather, you don't necessarily get safe ice. So that's one of my theories, and I might be all wet on that. But we used to have more ice. We played basketball, we roller skated a lot, and we used to have roller skating hockey on Ocean Avenue at Ocean Pathway. It was concrete there, and of course we didn't have the traffic in the winter. We had our goals at the two streets that come up to Ocean Avenue there. We used to wear out roller skates in those days. Of course all summer you had the beach, and after World War II, we formed the Ocean Grove Recreation Commission. We thought that the kids needed something for activity, so we developed a playground on Inskip Avenue. It was used quite a bit. We hired a schoolteacher for summer supervision at a five hundred dollar salary. He came to me, and I remember him saying to the commission, "You're wasting your money, you can't get many kids over here, they're all at the beach." So here you have a playground that's vacant in the summer. And that's the same thing would happen today if you had one. Now I'm not talking about tiny tots, we had tiny tots too, we had a seesaw and that kind of stuff, but I'm talking about the place where you play softball and that type of thing.

**Mr. Chambers:** Were the police strict with kids when you were younger?

**Mr. Kresge:** I don't think we had a problem. They were strict in the sense that you couldn't ride your bike on Sunday, now that would be strict for a kid. If that's what you mean by being strict, yes they were strict. And there used to be one cop called McGill, and all the kids called him Fatty McGill, and he was a bicycle cop. He used to go around town on a bike.

**Mr. Chambers:** When you went to the beach in the summertime, did you have a locker that your family would keep for the summer?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. But I don't think I needed anything when I was going down as a kid.

**Mr. Chambers:** You would just dress at home and walk to the beach?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes.

**Ms. Newman:** But the girls didn't walk in the street with their bathing suits on, did they?

**Mr. Kresge:** Little kids could, but not girls who were women, no.

**Ms. Newman:** Where would they change?

**Mr. Kresge:** Where their relatives had them over. You had to have a cover up. That didn't change until twenty years ago, maybe thirty.

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you remember a swimming pool at the South End at all?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, I don't. I never knew there was one.

**Ms. Newman:** But there had been one at the North End.

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, the North End, yes. The Recreation Commission used to sponsor a swimming meet there every year.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you participate in that?

**Mr. Kresge:** As kids, we used to go to the pool; we'd walk up to the beach from the South End, get up on the roof of the North End bathhouses, and dive into the pool so we didn't have to pay the ten cents or whatever it was. The gate man was right there looking the other way, so we'd get on the roof over here and jump in. That's what the boys did; the girls paid.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you play any of the games at the North End, I know they had skeeball.

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes. Everybody played skeeball. They had a shooting gallery, and bowling alleys. There was Ann Louise Candy, and a couple of restaurants, but that was there on the ocean side. They had a concert area on the pavilion where people would go and rock. Jenkinson had the North End and South End candy stores.

**Mr. Chambers:** One of the people up at the North End was an artist named Zad, did your family ever have any pictures done by Zad?

**Mr. Kresge:** Everybody had their picture done by Zad. In fact, our son has one that Zad did. I think his sketch cost three dollars. He was good, too.

**Mr. Chambers:** I'm always looking for them, at flea markets.

**Mr. Kresge:** I think almost every family that's ever been to Ocean Grove has one. The North End boardwalk also had a post office substation. There was also Kohr's Frozen Custard there. There was the Saratoga Root beer stand: all you could drink for ten cents. And big old Barnegat Bay Restaurant was there. People used to come down from the city and have lunch. It was an excursion restaurant. In other words, you could bring your sandwiches and things, and then buy sodas there, or ice cream, and they had a pavilion of tables. But that was more an excursion type of thing, not a restaurant. Anyway, going back to the post office substation. Billy Wegge, who is now a judge in Missouri, told me his job as a clerk at the substation at Ocean Grove was the best job he had ever in his life.

**Mrs. Kresge:** They used to have walkways from the North End hotel over to the pavilion and dining room. The walkways were also lobbies where guests sat to watch people go by.

**Mr. Chambers:** Now the pavilion was upstairs. Did you ever go to anything upstairs? What kind of programs were upstairs?

**Mr. Kresge:** The dining room was upstairs. The dining room of the North End. And they had a lot of affairs there.

**Mrs. Kresge:** And the swan boats on Wesley Lake were lovely.

**Mr. Kresge:** They had pedal boats too, on Wesley Lake.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did the ushers also have any of their functions at the North End?

**Mrs. Kresge:** That was the highlight of the social season.

**Mr. Kresge:** People used to line up to watch them come up to the entrance and see the girls, what they wore and all.

**Mr. Chambers:** They used to have a program put on by the ushers; it was called the "The Womanless Marriage." Can you tell us a little about that?

**Mr. Kresge:** They did it twice I think. It was all part of the auditorium ushers show, and they did that for years, and there'd be different themes.

**Mr. Chambers:** It must have been a riot.

**Mr. Kresge:** It was, you'd get a big crowd. You'd have ushers band, too, and all the ushers were in the show. Some were better than others. But mostly everybody came just for the laughs. But they had all kinds of skits. The North Gallery had their skit, the South Gallery had their skit, too.

**Mr. Chambers:** It was almost like a competition among the different sections of the auditorium ushers.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. The platform ushers. The ushers from different sections of the auditorium would have skits.

**Mrs. Kresge:** They used to have a man coming around in Ocean Grove in a truck, selling vegetables and things like that. I don't remember, did they have fish, Bill?

**Mr. Kresge:** No, I don't remember fish. They had fish market down on Olin Street there.

**Mrs. Kresge:** Where the little antique shop is now.

**Mr. Kresge:** Behind where the post office is now.

**Mr. Chambers:** Lenora Smith's father, W.C. Parker, ran that. Fred Smith's wife's father.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, Parker. And he built a house right up here on Stockton Avenue.

**Mr. Chambers:** Right on the corner.

**Ms. Newman:** What about Mrs. Wagner's pies? Was she around?

**Mr. Kresge:** It was probably there when I was a kid, but I don't know much about Wagner's pies. The neighbors purchased it. You know there were a lot of bakeries around. On Main Avenue where the delicatessen area is, they had their ovens under the sidewalk.

**Ms. Newman:** So you went across to Asbury Park regularly.

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes. We were kind of sister towns.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you go to the North End movie theater?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes. The big thing about the North End's Strand Theater was the matinee. The ladies came from around the shore. There was the bus line right in town, so this is the reason why I say that there were more people than cars. But, they had belt lines; they were light busses. Ocean Grove Beltline's last trip of the evening would be after the eleven o'clock show at the Strand Theater. It would take people back to Ocean Grove. People used to ride the belt line for a nickel. It would drive all around Ocean Grove, and get to the North End Hotel eventually. That was still going after the war. But before there were two routes, two busses going, A route and B route. They both would go to the oceanfront, but one would go to that part of town and the other this part of town.

**Ms. Newman:** Sounds like very happy memories.

**Mr. Kresge:** There are people around who remember the belt line, sure. You'll find out when you talk to other people.

**Ms. Newman:** When again did the North End Hotel come down?

**Mr. Kresge:** Can't remember the year. Let me think.

**Mr. Chambers:** The first North End Hotel burned. Were you around? It was the first fire.

**Mr. Kresge:** That was in the 1920s wasn't it? Yes. Well, there were two or three fires at the North End. The biggest fire of course was in December, 1977 right on Ocean Pathway. The Majestic and the Pathway Manor, the Ardmore burned, and then the Dun Haven. They all went; it was quite a fire. We didn't know it, we were sleeping!

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you have any mementos from the hotel?

**Mr. Kresge:** Not major, but we do have photos and things.

**Mr. Chambers:** Ms. Hurry has a piece of the Hindenburg. Now do you remember that?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, but not too well. I remember running down later, but the point is I wasn't there when it exploded and burned.

**Mr. Chambers:** Do you remember the Morro Castle?

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes. I remember that. That was about 1934. Richard Gibbons was the young editor at The Ocean Grove Times at the time, and he reported the fire in a New York City newspaper in a front page story with a byline. I don't know which one it was off hand, but he can tell you more about it. He was at The Times at the time, then he went to The Asbury Park Press.

**Mr. Chambers:** Did you walk down the next morning to see when it was still smoking?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Chambers:** And what were the crowds like?

**Mr. Kresge:** Tremendous.

**Mr. Chambers:** Even that morning?

**Mr. Kresge:** Oh, yes.

**Mrs. Kresge:** It was like a ghost. Of course we didn't have television, but we did have radio, and it had been announced that the ship had exploded. Oh, it really was a mob scene.

**Mr. Kresge:** I gave a Morro Castle postcard to the museum, and the artist for that postcard was a friend of Marsha and Chuck Kendron. He didn't know it until he saw it in the reserve and he said, "I know him."

**Mr. Chambers:** I know that it became somewhat of a big tourist attraction.

**Mr. Kresge:** It was for a couple of years. It was there a while.

**Ms. Newman:** Looking back on your time here, thinking about all of your accomplishments, is there anything that you feel you have not yet accomplished that you would still like to see accomplished? Or that you would still like to see happen in Ocean Grove?

**Mrs. Kresge:** Yes, I'd like to see something happen up there where the North End Hotel was.

**Mr. Kresge:** Yes, I'd like to see a parking lot. To me it's worth more than the million that it'd cost. If you think all the cars are bad now, what are you going to do with all of these Ford motors that they are turning out every year?

**Mrs. Kresge:** Try to encourage having a life-care center here. Harrogate is down around Lakewood, and is to me, the nicest. But they would be equally as nice there. I think there were plans, but it wasn't encouraged at all.

**Mr. Chambers:** I think that's why they took the North End Hotel down preparing for that full-care facility and then it never happened.

**Mrs. Kresge:** But it would have been nice. And it wouldn't have a lot of children that you would have to support as far as schooling is concerned. We've got enough in Neptune.

**Mr. Kresge:** Well, it was ahead of its time. But now, my goodness, they're putting up a dime a dozen. They're all over the place. The Meridian, which is Jersey Shore Medical Center, is putting up one someplace. But anyway the North End Hotel is shut up and gone.

**Mr. Chambers:** I guess it's the same with the South End pavilion.

**Mr. Kresge:** I think the storms took that pretty much.

**Ms. Kresge:** They used to have things out on the pier.

**Mr. Kresge:** I used to be a locker boy down on the East Side of the boardwalk, down at the South End, when I was a kid.

**Mr. Chambers:** They still had a small section of the old bathing lockers west off the boardwalk, but that was finally taken down.

**Mr. Kresge:** That was because it was condemned by the Township of Neptune. That's what did it. You know we probably couldn't build that tent colony today. You couldn't do it. Now what's wrong with a summer Tent Colony, another one wouldn't hurt, more of them wouldn't hurt. What's wrong with it? But the point is that your zoning would say no.

**Ms. Newman:** It does make more of a unique character.

**Mr. Kresge:** That's what they say and if you left it to Township, they would have had them all gone.

**Ms. Newman:** We've seen progress in some ways and lack of progress in other ways.

**Mr. Kresge:** I remember when the tent cottages didn't even have private baths, they had the facilities in the center. It was better than an outhouse; it was a seweried building and it had showers. It was in the center of the block.

**Mrs. Kresge:** People really loved the tent-cottages. We tried it one year; ugh!

**Mr. Kresge:** We didn't care for it. But we have a home here.

**Mrs. Kresge:** But they do fix them up.

**Mr. Kresge:** Everybody's fixed them up, yes.

**Ms. Newman:** Thank you for this very interesting interview about Ocean Grove during the twentieth century.

**Mr. Kresge:** You are welcome.