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## Interview with Bill Hogan

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**Title: Wheeling's Wide-Open Days**

**Date: June 07, 1994; Interview #: KK-CT-001-112**

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**Bill Hogan: My name is Bill Hogan.**

**Michael Kline:** Now, you were saying?

**BH:** I was saying that part of the history that is unique about Wheeling is the gambling and the rest of the open-town part of it. There are a lot of industrial towns, but I don't think there were--oh, there were probably some like this out in the Wild West--but this is a very small town where everybody knew all the players. I think that is what made it different. When I was a youngster, talking about when I was in high school, there was an awful lot of big money around; gambling money and people. The race track was open. Zeller's was open. The Pirate Cafe was open, and those were big, big places. It was always reputed that Bill Lias ran a lay-off operation for all the horse books. In other words, when a bookie in New York got a piece of a bet he couldn't handle, he would lay it off here, and that was a tremendous amount of money.

**MK:** Lay-off means?

**BH:** Well, he couldn't handle it all. He didn't want to take the risk, so they would spread the risk. In other words, they could call up somebody, and they would bankroll the bet, of course for a

fee. If an independent bookie tried to do that, and the horse would win, it would wipe him out. He didn't want to risk all of his capitol on one race, so he would lay-off the bet. Lay-off the bet means he would spread out the risk, and one of the places he could do that was here in Wheeling. [ [Return to Top](#) ] When I was a kid, there was--is this going to be for publication or what, I mean some of this is . . .?

**MK:** Anytime you want me to shut off . . .

**BH:** Let's put it this way, I know people that used to go down to--There was a Tenderloin District in the south of town (23d Street was wide-open, prostitution) and neighborhood kids and kids--it was nothing for them, I'm talking about young adults, to go over and sit in the houses of prostitution, because you could listen to the jukebox box free; and the ladies of the evening would give you free soda pop. I knew people that used to do that. There was never anything morally wrong with it. It was just something you did. When it got dark, this was usually in the summer months, the customers would start coming around, and the women would say, "Okay kids, clear out. It is time for business", and they would kick us out. It was just accepted fact. When you grow up, you think everybody grows up the way you do. They didn't, because I remember when I went away to school, I talked about this, and people were just hanging opened mouth. "You did what?" There was . . .

**MK:** Let's see if I got this right. They would run sort of a hospitality party in the afternoon for the youngsters?

**BH:** No, it just happened that way. They were neighbors, and the people who lived down there knew them, and the kids on the street knew them, and it was . . . Everything is the city at that time--While it was against the law, it was condoned. In the old days they said that (it was unwritten) as long as everything stayed below the creek, this was considered entertainment for the working man; prostitution, gambling, so forth. So long as it stayed south of Wheeling Creek--that was an unwritten law, but it was there. You never saw women working bars up town, it was below the creek, and the place was loaded with salons. There was just one right after another, because there were big payrolls here. I can remember the fellow that owned the Green Lantern Cafe, across from where Zanke's is today, he said, "You forget that when the whistle blew, there were 5,000 men on the street." There would be 2,500 men going in and 2,500 men going out. He was probably talking about the whole town, but there was big bucks. They all stopped and had a beer or something. [ [Return to Top](#) ] **When he was in high school**, he told me back during the War years in the early 40s, that at a nickel a shot, if he didn't make \$500 on punchboards (that was his job as a teenager) it was a very slow Saturday afternoon.

**MK:** On . . .?(61)

**BH:** Punchboards. It was a nickel a shot. Do you know what punchboards are? They were printed things, and you paid a nickel and you punched out a thing that you unfolded, and it had a number on it. If you had a certain number, then you got a chance at the prizes that were sealed up in the top of the board. You peeled off a thing, and maybe it was a \$5 prize, maybe it was a \$20 prize, or a big prize might be \$50 or something like that. They would pass these punchboards

around until they were all gone. He said that you would be ankle deep in punches. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** At a nickel a shot, that is thousands of people.

**BH:** There were mobs around here. You can't imagine. It was tough in the 40s when I went to high school in town. I packed a lunch because you couldn't get anything to eat in a restaurant in whatever you were allowed for lunch at that time, 30-40 minutes. You couldn't get in them. You had to bag a lunch to get something to eat at lunchtime. There was, I'm trying to think what else-- the best idea is to get somebody about the same age, and then you can sit and reminisce and bounce off one another.

**MK:** We've been doing some of that. Let's go back a little bit to your own scene. What year were you born?

**BH:** Born in 1929.

**CK:** What was your birthday?

**BH:** January 26, 1929. (81)

**MK:** Could you talk a little bit about the neighborhood that you grew up in and your own family?

**BH:** Well, I grew up in a middle class neighborhood. I lived out the Pike. We grew up in a family where we didn't have to worry about . . . and this is during the Depression, of course, we didn't have to worry about food or clothing. We led a very nice life. **I was a Roman Catholic, and I had to go to the Catholic high school**, so I entered Central Catholic, right up here on Byron Street in 1942 I think it was, and I was known as an "out the Piker". All the kids who went to Central at that time, all lived downtown here, with the exception of a few of us who were Catholic and out the Pike, and we had to come in to go to school. If you didn't--There was a Roman Catholic bishop by the name of Swint at that time, I don't know if anybody ever talked about him, but he was tough, and if you wanted to go to Tridelphia which was much closer, which was a public high school, your parents had to go in and see Bishop Swint. If he disapproved and you went to school, I don't know what they would do. I think they excommunicated the parents. It was really tough. He was the guy who made Time magazine, I forget when it was. Right after the War, they had a beauty pageant for Miss Wheeling, and it was held at the Amphitheater in Oglebay. They had a large contingent of the Wheeling Symphony play, and the Bishop said that any Roman Catholic that participates in this pageant will be excommunicated, so that took care of half of the orchestra and the MC and some of the contestants. He was rough, very tough. Those were the days when there weren't any gray areas. You knew what was right and what was wrong. [ [Return to Top](#) ] I can't think what else to tell you. **I worked at the race track.** I told you that, I think, with Bill Lias around, that was interesting. (110)

**MK:** How did you start out? How did you get a job like that?

**BH:** Well, let's see. There was a man by the name of Wilson Siburt who had Siburt's Hilltop, where we all used to go. It was a roadhouse. It was where Mull's Grocery Store is now at the corner of 88 North and Peter's Run Road. It was way out in the country then, and Wilson Siburt operated that. He was also Vice President of Wheeling Downs when Lias' owned it. We would go to him and say we wanted a job that summer, to work at the track, because it was very good money, and he would make arrangements for us to be employed over there. So one day, when I was supposed to go over--we went over on Sunday morning, you got called out, your name, and you were supposed to be there at 8 o'clock, and I didn't get called. I remember that I was over at the races one day, and he was a big man and he had a limp and he always had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, and he came up and said, "How are you, Bill?". I said, "Fine, Mr. Siburt." He said, "How do you like your job over here?" I said, "I didn't get hired." He said, "You didn't get hired? What do you mean you didn't get hired? Were you over here at 8 o'clock?" I said, "Yes sir, I was." He said, "You come with me." So he limped over to the windows, and he said, "Get Mr. Barr." Mr. Barr ran that pari-mutuel system, and Mr. Barr was on the other side of the windows. He said, "Mr. Barr, this is Mr. Hogan. Mr. Hogan is working for you." He turned around and walked away, and that was that. I ran money then. That was when I started running money from the money room to the sellers.

**MK:** You ran money?

**BH:** Yes. Because the sellers, that was before totes, and they started off with a box of tickets with a change box and no money. So, if somebody came up with a \$10 bill to buy a \$2 ticket, they didn't have any change, so they would holler "change", and we would take the ten and give them five ones and a five dollar bill. It was pretty hectic at the beginning of every race, because everybody was hollering for change to sell tickets. Then we had a nice thing as a runner, because we could walk up and down the line, and the sellers were on one end, and the cashiers were on the other. The cashiers couldn't buy tickets, and the sellers couldn't cash them if they had a winner. So we used to do that for them. Then, what they would always do, is give us a breakage, if the payoff was \$2.40, they would give us 40 cents. If it was \$22.60, they would give us \$2.60. It was always the custom to give the runner, the guy who bought these tickets and cashed them for you, got the odd change, so we did pretty well at that.

**MK:** It sounds exciting.

**BH:** It was. Then we had one guy the first year we were hired over there--there was one fellow who was from the Island. I have forgotten his name, I think it was Pat Kelsey, but anyway, he was a big, good-looking, Irish kid, and Lias said, "I want him to work in the office." So we were all excited about what went on in the office, and so after work we all got Pat and said, "Pat, what do you do in there?" He said, "Nothing. I just keep these pitchers of ice water filled." Then, later on we said, "Do you do anything now?" He said, "They wanted me to look good, sit out in the front." So one day one of Lias' people came out and said, "Can you write?", and he said, "Yes."; and he really could. Pat was a very bright guy. He said, "Mr. Lias wants you to write a letter to his aunt someplace, and tell her everything is fine, and make it five pages." So he wrote this letter, and somebody showed it to him, and then after he was in business, because he was a good writer and he wrote about the beautiful Wheeling Downs and the river and the birds and all that kind of stuff, so he was his letter writer. [ [Return to Top](#) ] (164)

**MK:** But all the other people who were working around there, sort of dreamed of getting that close to Bill Lias?

**BH:** **There was a lot of mystique connected with the guy.** Everyone knew who Bill Lias was, but you couldn't get next to him; you couldn't get near him. He was an underworld figure, and everybody knew it. He owned a big piece of the town, and all the gambling and all that kind of stuff. Of course, in that era, there were people shot and killed on the streets and all that sort of thing, and it was never discovered who did a lot of these things. I remember when there was a kid, we used to shoot marbles in a gravel driveway, and that is where Harry Weidetz was gunned down. He was bringing his car home one night, and got out of the car to unlock the garage door, and a guy stepped from behind a tree, and shot him with a sawed-off shotgun. Then they drove off and drove across the bridge that is now a walking bridge across the creek by Wheeling Jesuit College and threw it in the creek, and that was never . . . I think Lias' first wife was killed, you know, out here on 15th Street. There were a lot of things like that. Nobody ever talked about it. I know for a fact that after a hijacking during the War of a tractor trailer of liquor that was rationed, during the War you couldn't get it-- I know a man who received a case of Golden Wind whiskey that was some of the hijacked stuff without any state tax stamps on it. [ [Return to Top](#) ] **I remember Zeller's Steak House was a lovely place.** I had a job after school at Fahey's Florist. One of my jobs was to take a panel truck full of flowers and go down to Zeller's and put flowers all through that place. There was one man who was a prominent lawyer celebrating his wedding anniversary, and he went and had too much to drink and went to the gambling tables and lost what he had and wrote some IOU's and stuff like that. The next day, one of Lias people came to his office and handed him his cash and his IOU's and said, "I hope you and your wife enjoyed your anniversary party." That way he kept the people in Wheeling from raising too much cain about what he was doing, because he was a good guy. Now, if you were from Pittsburgh, Columbus or Cleveland, you could get fleeced and that was it, but he took care of the local people. He was very charitable at Christmas time. He always gave out many, many baskets of food and provisions for the poor and needy people. He always travelled, in those days, a lot of times with an entourage of body guards. He used to get his hair cut down on--the guy who, his father just died a couple of years ago--but he would go in there and get his hair cut, and there would be a person at the back door, a person at each window while he got his hair cut. (209)

**MK:** What was the name of the shop?

**BH:** I don't know. It was Kirschner, I think, was the guy's name. But, he always remembered Lias, because when he left he always gave him a silver dollar, and that was big stuff. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** **Did this all have to do with the personality and the abilities of Bill Lias,** or had Wheeling always had a character kind of like this that Bill Lias stepped into?

**BH:** I think there was always . . . It was a mill town, imported labor in here. I think they wanted to keep the labor happy, so they provided them with amusements. Amusements were prostitution, gambling, and liquor. Of course, liquor was illegal then, but you could get a drink any place in town here. It was the idea that a lot of people said that you had the mill owners and the mine operators and owners lived out the Pike, and they wanted that kept nice, and as long as

everybody was happy in town and working, that was all they cared about. So, there was never any law enforcement as long as things were kept orderly, and a lot of people claim that the streets were a lot safer then than they are today, in certain sections of town. But, you never, nobody would ever bother you if you were patronizing these places, because then you would be fooling with, interfering with business, and they would make sure you didn't do it again. Protect their clientele. Then, down at the Pirate Cafe--I was never allowed in there, but there were bar booth games in there, and that was a dice game. The house man just takes a cut out, and they had stickmen down there that could take, I think it was 2% or 2 1/2%, of the middle of everything, and keep bets going. That was all they did. They ran the day and took their percent out. These guys were like calculators in their minds; take 2, 2 1/2% out of both sides of the bet and see that everybody got paid off. Big, big money. They came from all over to do that, because it was run correctly and it was protected. People didn't have to worry about another bunch of people busting in the place and robbing you. You didn't have to worry about the police raiding the place. The biggest danger was getting your money to the game, and getting it back home again to Cleveland, Pittsburgh or wherever you were going to go. It was big stuff.

**MK:** If you still had any money.

**BH:** Well, it was an honest game. It was actually an honest game, because you are not betting against the house. The house is running the game and taking out a percent of all the bets. You are betting against the other players. That is the way most of the games--used to play poker at the Alpha out the Pike, and the houseman dealt and took a percentage of the pot, they never participated--and that is the way the games were. You always knew that they were fair, and they passed the deal, so you would have . . . your turn, you wouldn't always be behind the gun, or in front of the gun, whatever you want to call it, as far as the deal was concerned. (262)

**MK:** What did you call them? Stickmen?

**BH:** Yes. They would run the money back and forth. If you were going to bet against, you know a big table, like a big crap table, and you were going to bet against somebody--say you were going to bet against. . . whatever you were going to bet against on the roll--it is sort of like a crap game, only different rules, but there was no house playing there. You were betting directly against a person, then your bet--I forget what the percentage was because I never got in there, I only got in there once--I think it was 2% or 2 1/2% or something--but they could take 2 or 2 1/2% out of that bet just like that. So, it was a very fast game, moving all the time. Nobody ever questioned them. There were poker games around Wheeling, which were always table stakes. People used to go to those games, and they would bet their restaurant or their bar on it across the table, back and forth, all night long. Wild and wooly stuff. Then I went into the brokerage business. [ [Return to Top](#) ] 283 **Let me tell you about Charlie Zambito.** Charlie Zambito was a beautiful character. He ran a gambling operation out where the Bella Via restaurant is now. Charlie, I don't think, maybe was a high school graduate. I know he didn't have a college education, and I am fairly certain that he didn't finish high school, but he was a very smart guy, and when he had to go legal--Arch Riley broke up all these things in town, a young prosecutor and closed up everything. Charlie like to gamble, that was his thing. I used to eat down there a lot, and he came up one time and he said, "Hey Bill, tell me about the stock business." He had a broken arm at that time, and he couldn't do much. I would talk to him. He said, "Send me some

information on it." So, I sent him some information out. Then he called me up and said, "How do I open up a margin account?" I said, "Send me a check for \$2,000 and sign the margin agreement." So he sent in a pretty big check, I forgot what it was, a lot more than that, and he said, "Now what do I have to do?" I said, "Just tell me what you want to buy." So, he called up one day, and I will never forget, he said, "What is mono-B?" I said, "It is 22 bid, 22 1/4 offer, something like that." He said, "Put 10 Gs on it." You know, you buy in 100 share units. I said, "That is not how you do it, Charlie. You buy in 100 share units." Gamblers are always great losers. They don't worry about . . . They never hold you accountable for it. I can remember two things I always liked about him. Everybody knew what he had. It wasn't confidential. I mean, he walked into the board room and yelled across the thing, he said, "What is Helene Curtis?" Somebody said, "15 1/2 down two." He said, "My God, that is a lot of spaghetti." They ran a spaghetti restaurant and they were thinking that was a lot of spaghetti dinners going out the window. One time, he was at the El-tronics machine, a quote machine, and he turned around and bumped right into Arch Riley, the guy who closed him up, and he patted the machine and said, "That is the best game in town, Arch, and you can't touch it." The stock market, he loved it. He was a big hearted guy. There was an old lady, an old waitress named Rose, that sort of retired out at the Bella Via. I was out there one night, and his son came up and said, "Dad, what are we going to do about Rose?" He said, "Well, I told you to get her a busboy." He said, "Well she is having trouble getting the meals to the table." He said, "Get her two busboys. One to deliver the food, and one to pick it up, and let Rose pick up the tip." That was how he took care of Rose. Nice guy. Really a nice guy. That was the time when there was honor among thieves. These people would give you their word, and you could put it in the bank. They were absolutely scrupulously honest. Now, they had another attitude toward gambling laws and liquor laws, but as far as moral turpitude, those guys were--it was all business, it was all a business thing. People did it so they could live. They didn't do it so they could buy gold chains and big cars. They did it so they could live and support a family. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** So that as long as it was kept below the creek or it didn't creep out the Pike, it was okay?

**BH:** It was okay. That was sort of the unwritten law, but it was so wide-open down there. I can remember that you would go to the Five and Ten to get these little tin signs that you would screw on the door, you know, "Beware of Dog" or something like that. They used to sell them up there, and they would screw them on the doors, and this was a private residence, because people were around hammering on doors because the houses of prostitution were so plentiful. Shut that off, and maybe I can . . . (354)

**MK:** You were saying there were a lot of groups?

**BH:** A lot of different nationalities in here, and it was down here where the Straub parking lot is, the used car lot, it was a bank on Market and 16th, and there was a foreign exchange window in there. I was told that; I didn't see it. But there were enough people . . . This was a custom house. It was a port of entry back in the old days, and there were that many foreigners floating through here that they had an exchange window, an exchange for foreign currency. I am trying to think what else there was. **The other thing was . . .**there was a guy whose name was Tony Cerra--I don't know whether his family is still here, some of his family still is, so I don't know if you want to use that name or not--he reputedly was a guy who ran the girls from Steubenville to Wheeling,

which was in violation of the Federal Man Act. He always had a big car, and he always had plenty of money, but he never worked. I remember that he was always flashing a big roll. We were at all this house one night, out in Kenwood Place, and we all used to go there and get chilli after midnight, and Tony was there that night--I don't know how he got in there, but anyway, he was there and they were shooting quoits in the center hall, and he was betting. He was a big, big, big shot, and he was betting money and all this stuff, and the man who owned the house, the father of this big family, and he had had a couple, and he saw this guy, and he said, "Who is that?" He saw the gambling going on and he didn't like it. He walked over and said, "What is your name?" He said, "I am Tony Cerra." He said, "You got a lot of money with you, don't you?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "What are you doing? Shooting quoits for money?" And he said, "Yeah." And he pulled some car keys out, and he said, "There are the keys to a brand new Lincoln out there. I am going to shoot that against all the money you got with you." Then he took all the quoits, and he flipped them real fast and they all landed. He said, "Now, pick up your money and get out of here." But he beat him, you know what I mean? But there were all those people floating around the town at that time. We didn't think anything of it. Parents did, but we didn't. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** So, growing up in this era, you were never afraid for yourself?

**BH:** No, never.

**MK:** You kept your nose clean then?

**BH:** It was just part of the . . . It was like wallpaper. You didn't even notice it. You just assumed that every town was like this. There was a lot of gambling, a lot of drinking. There was a lot of prostitution across the creek. I was never interested in that. I would love to . . . I did my share of drinking and my share of gambling, but not big time. I mean, there were some really high rollers around here. Mine was strictly on an amateur level.

**MK:** It sounds like a reputation that might have been enjoyed more by river towns than by . . .

**BH:** Well, it was a river town, and then I heard they used to run cruise ships up in here. You know, you would come to Wheeling on a cruise boat, the old river boats, because it was the place to be. If you go down to Undo's to eat, if you go in the men's room at Undo's, there is a picture of Jack Dempsey (and I am trying to think who the other player was, he was a champion) at Wheeling Downs. This is where people came. It is hard to believe that, but it was. But, Lindberg came here. He made a stop. This was really a booming town. You forget, the Blaw Knox plant that just closed, they designed and built the gates for Panama Canal here. A lot of early flying history out of here. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** Flying?

**BH:** People just had a interest in flying by private citizens. You know the Faulker Aircraft factory was down in Glendale, and they made Faulker's down there and flew them out of there. I remember there was that lady who was a pilot for Miss Fidelity or something like that, a private plane for Fidelity Insurance Company which went broke--he was a friend of a lot of the people

who flew in the Cleveland air races in those days, and they would come through here, and it was a place where things happened. That is why a lot of people came here, and they made big money and built huge places around here. Have you been out and seen some of the old places that were built back at the turn of the century and on?

**MK:** I have seen some, the Stifel home, places like that.

**BH:** I can't think of anything else.

**MK:** When did all of this begin to change then?

**BH:** **Probably when, it was over a period of years,** it was still going good in the 40s and 50s. I don't know, probably in the 60s, it started down. Industry started to change. The complexion of industry. All the mills around here really became obsolete. Foreign competition came in making steel and that type of thing; but, it was a number of factors. It was a whole bunch of things. It just changed. The laws changed. People's attitudes changed towards things. I always think the people that established the industries around here were really gamblers. They were high rollers, because for every one of them, there was a thousand guys who tried it, and went broke. [ [Return to Top](#) ] I tell you a guy you ought to talk to too, Andy Zaleski. He could tell you a lot of stuff. Do you know Andy Zaleski?

**MK:** I don't know him yet.

**BH:** He is at Legg Mason. He is a broker at Legg Mason. He could tell you a lot about it. Andy is in his 80s someplace, and he could tell you a lot about it.

**CK:** Zaleski?

**BH:** ZALESKI, I think it is. But, you see, this is like a piece of Americana that I think is really neglected in history. Nobody talks about this, but this is as much a part of the development of the country, especially in this area, as the steel industry or the coal mining industry. And not only that, it gives body to the people that did all of this. It isn't as though somebody came from, you know, a graduate school in business and came in here and started these steel mills. They didn't. These were hard working, hard drinking, gamblers that did this, because they gambled with everything they had on these operations. Along with that--I think it was like this in a lot of industrial towns in the United States, because the idea was that if you could keep the working man happy, then they will work. But here, as I said, this whole thing was big, and it was in port, and it was small and contained. So everybody got to know everybody in here, and it was not like there was a section of town which was two miles away that was the Tenderloin District. The Tenderloin District was 13, 20, blocks from the Cathedral, and two blocks from St. Alphonsus, which was a big German church. And all of these people intermingled.

**MK:** So a new face in town was likely to be noticed?

**BH:** Yes, I think so. Although there were more people moving in in those days than are moving out. And there were established, probably established strata in--social economic strata that were

established more in those days. There were a lot of first generation immigrants, people of immigrant families here. When I went to high school, a lot of the kids could speak and understand (or maybe they couldn't speak it, but they could understand) Polish and Italian, because their grandparents lived with them, and a lot of those customs came over. **It was just . . .** **I remember when Joe** was graduated from high school. Joe went to high school here up at Central, and he lived up at Short Creek. He would carry a gun to school to hunt with on the way home. He would break it down, and then he would shoot squirrel or rabbit on the way home. That was accepted because they were going to eat them. We finished high school, and his father was killed in a mining accident. His mother was the postmistress up there. He had a sister. I remember when he graduated from high school and enlisted in the Marine Corps, they had a going-away party for him. I went up to the party, and his mother was there--very delicate older lady, and his sister--walked in the front door, and she said, "Do you have a wrist watch?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Well, I will keep that for you." Then she said, "Do you have anything else that is breakable? Any glasses?" And I said, "No. I don't have anything so fine." She handed me a shot glass and two bottles of beer. I went out and sat around the fire, and his sister poured shots. Then everybody played football, and it ended up that I was the football. I was a little guy, weighed about 125, and there were big, big guys from Steubenville Big Red and those teams, and we went all night, and then we all slept on the lawn. That was a going-away party for Joe. They broke the floor joist in the house that night. This was all a stag. But they got polkas out, and they started polkaing, and they broke the floor joists. I remember walking across the floor the next day, and it was like walking across a springboard. Ended up going down to the local tavern down there--it is gone, it was on the River Road--just walked in, and this guy said, "Everybody out of here." We were going to have a party, and everybody got out. There wasn't any trouble. That was 1946. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** Was your dad in the bonds business too?

**BH:** No. He was a distributor for General Electric here in town. He was a business man.

**CK:** Do the Hogans go way back in Wheeling? (583)

**BH:** No. My mother's family was fairly large. She was a McFadden, and they had a dry goods business. My dad is from Pittsburgh. He met my mother in Butler, Pennsylvania, at a house party. When they married, he moved down here and he started, that was in the 20s, selling General Electric appliances, and then became a distributor for General Electric in West Virginia and parts of Pennsylvania. I can't think of anything else. If I think of anything else I will call you. All right?

**MK:** Yes.

**MK:** . . .people respected? (605)

**BH:** Well, they were attracted to Wheeling because they respected the expertise that was here. There were all sorts of artists. There were all sorts of industrialists. They had great know-how. You know, you look at the line up of names that came out of here. I can't remember them all, but like George Casorth, you know he was instrumental in starting the radio here and little theater,

and he was a celebrated photographer, but he was really a Renaissance guy. He did a lot of stuff. The guy who started North American Aviation came out of Wheeling here, I can't remember his name. What was it? Kindleberger or something like that.

**MK:** Father of heart surgery, too?

**BH:** No, I don't know about that. There was a dental surgeon, an oral surgeon. There were a lot of brains here. They had new concepts and stuff like that. This building over here, you know, that was the western terminus of the B&O railroad. This was where you jumped off to go west. When you look at that . . . **Did you ever look at the menu that they had the McClure Hotel?** When that thing came in here in 1858, or something, God, it was beautiful. The railroads could bring everything in. There was a lot of seafood in here in those days. You look at the old Russians had fresh oysters and fresh clams. They would bring them in in ice barrels from Baltimore. It was a big seafood town in here. But they had gold table service, all the fine foods, exotic foods, and everything else was served--these beautiful, detailed, formal dinners were conducted here. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** A lot of class?

**BH:** Yes. There really was, a lot of it. And of course, with the industrialization and the money that was made here, they supported the arts a lot. **It has always been historically a good art town.** It was a good theater town; good legitimate theater. There were legitimate theaters all up and down here. The old Vic up there that they just restored, that was a vaudeville house. They used to bring shows in here, and there were a lot of big stars of the day who would play Wheeling. Wheeling was part of the circuit. So it was a thriving, bustling, vital town or city in those days. They talk about it being the richest city per capita in the United States in the 20s. They had a Rolls Royce dealership out there where Kroger is now. I don't know how many different first class jewelry stores lined Market Street, along with 200 and some salons, but it was really a boom town. There was--I just remembered, I got a good collection of stock certificates, different companies that started here; Faulker Aircraft Company, Palace Furniture Company, gold mining companies out in the west. But it was a corporate town. People started corporations here. Back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it was very sophisticated when you think about it. They put together the Wheeling Steel Corporation from the Whitaker, Glessner, all those things were put together. Sterling Drug really started out here. That was the old neuralgia ring. Somebody must have given you the history on that; but they sold that stuff. They peddled it off the back of a wagon. Then, the Weiss family was from Germany, and they brought the US patent for Bayer Aspirin over here, went into Sterling products. Then in the days when they were forming cartels in the late 20s, US Steel was formed, Standard Oil of New Jersey was formed. They formed Drug Incorporated, and Sterling Drug went into that, and out of that, when they broke them up, came Sterling Drug, and Bristol Myers, and Rexall, which is now Darv Industries, and Beechnut, which is now Squibb-Beechnut. They have changed, but those were probably the best group of stocks you could own in the United States for the last . . .

**MK:** Begin again.

**BH:** Well, the drug stocks, between the drug holdings that were here, the old Cookwait Laboratory was out there on 18th Street, and still stands, and I think it belongs to Ogden Newspapers now, they store newsprint in it. But all these drug companies--there were so many of them in here--and there is a lot of low cost drug stock, and then the city--you see it not only had the steel and the mining, but you had the drug industry, which really didn't start here except for the investment end of it. In those days, when the Germans came over, they all stuck together. If somebody needed money, they all went together; and if somebody needed money to start a business, they all bought stock to help them out. So, that stock is all through the city here. As I said, you walk down Market Street, and it looks like you could buy the whole town for \$10,000 and there is 1.2 billion dollars in trust in WesBanco, and there is about another 600,000-800,000 up at the old Security Bank. You got like, 2 billion dollars in trust here. That money was all made here, and nurtured, and managed, and did big things. [ [Return to Top](#) ] **Now, it is at the tail end, because it went through estate planning and generation skipping,** and now as the older people are dying off, their children and grandchildren are out of the city, so it is going to be distributed out in other places because their heirs no longer live here. Very, very few young people live here, from any of the families, wealthy or poor, because the opportunity is not here, so they are gone.

**MK:** Some of the money is . . . so there is a lot of money in the town at the moment, which is headed out?

**BH:** Yes. Portions of it will stay here, but a lot of it will be distributed out of the city, because it will go to the . . . it skipped a generation, and the second generation here, most of their children are out of the city. You don't see many young people here in this town. There just isn't anybody. You look at your demographics of any part of the state of West Virginia, with the exception, maybe, of the Eastern Panhandle, in the next ten years, your age grouping from about 60 on up is going to increase, yet the total population is going down because the only thing is left for guys like me, you know they are getting older. I have six children. One is here in Wheeling. Five are gone. It is fairly typical. [ [Return to Top](#) ] (757)

**MK:** It never occurred to me how much social history there would be if you understood the history of stocks and bonds and banking.

**BH:** Oh my God, yes.

**MK:** It really just paints the picture, doesn't it?

**BH:** Yes. Sterling Drug, when I was in the business, could have been voted out of Wheeling. Then, because of that, there were directorships which crossed over into American Home Products. There was a lot of American Home Products here. There was a guy here who was just a good money manager. There are excellent investors here. There is a guy right now up at WesBanco who is one of the best in the country. People don't know that, but he is. They have managed; there is a tradition of managing assets and managing it well. Otherwise, you wouldn't have close to 2 billion dollars sitting in trust departments here. It is fantastic when you think about it. Another thing I think that points out the wealth of the city at one time, if you go through the graveyards. Go out to Mount Calvary, and especially Greenwood, and look at the

mausoleums and the statuary that is out there. A lot of those people spent more money dying and being buried than a lot of people spend in a lifetime, living. But all that stuff combined to make-- **The other thing I have always like about Wheeling**, growing up here, was that it was nothing to go to a social function here, and I have been to social functions, where you would have the president of a college, you would have the guy that ran the gasoline station, and probably two of probably the most wealthy guys in the state of West Virginia, absolutely on an even par.

**MK:** Socially?

**BH:** Yes, because they probably hunt together. Maybe they fish together or go to ball games together or something. It is a--I have never seen a town that had a more democratic quality than this. It is very easy to move into Wheeling, and if you have an activity in which you're interested and you have something to contribute, it will be adopted, whether it is sports, or arts, or something like that. That is why so many people get transferred in here and they are dragged in kicking and screaming, and then they don't want to leave. It has enough culture and traditions and a flavor of history here that is unique that makes it a kind of a place that gives you a comfort to live, because anything, I think, that makes people nervous is something that is new and doesn't have any fingerprints on it, so you are afraid to pick up. This is a town that is easy to pick up, because you are not going to disturb any markings. They have all been there before. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** It already has a little bit of tarnish on it.

**BH:** Yes. It is comfortable. It is like an old pair of slippers.

**MK:** I suppose that is what makes it so attractive to the Park service?

**BH:** **There again, you have a guy up there, Homer Fish**, who came in here and he was one of the first park directors, (there were one or two ahead of him) but he had the vision of Oglebay Park and developed that. That was his idea. He didn't read that in a book anywhere. People come from all over to study Oglebay Park. We went out of town to a wedding, and we went to play tennis at the club. The club consisted of two asphalt courts, and this is a very nice commuter town in Massachusetts, around Boston. My God, we have, I think, 21, 22, or 23 hard true courts that are available to play tennis in this area. People never pay any attention to it, and you always get a kick when somebody's newly graduated young adult moves some place and they set up housekeeping, and they ask somebody where their park is and they expect to find another Oglebay; and there isn't any of them, or Wheeling for that matter. Those places are unique, and that is all the vision of a guy here in Wheeling. He didn't get rich doing it, but Homer Fish was a neat guy.

**CK:** Homer Fish?

**BH:** Yes. FISH. His portrait is hanging up there in Wilson Lodge. [ [Return to Top](#) ] All that flooring up there--that was all local artisans, all stone cutters who did that kind of stuff. There are a lot of good craftsman around here. These old houses that Victorian Wheeling houses, you look in there and look at that--this stuff in here, they have done the same thing--the painting and the

graining and all that sort of thing, that was all done here. There was just a lot of creativity here, industrial wise, corporate conceptional wise, as well as the visual arts, especially visual arts and performing arts. We have always been rich in that. You get a little town like this, you have maybe 30,000 people, and we have really good, I think, excellent theater here, you know Towngate theater. You go down there and see a production, and it is great stuff. There has always been tradition of this stuff going on here. I don't know where all these people come from, because they graduate from school or go on to someplace else, there is always somebody filling right in. We have good writers that have come out of here. There was a woman named Grace Coughlan that used to own the Howard Apartments at one time, and her claim to fame was that Frank Lloyd Wright came here, and she was a friend of Frank Lloyd Wright's. She always said that she sewed the hem of his cloak. He had a lot of respect for Grace. Grace is one of these unique people. There are a lot of them--just characters that feel very comfortable with themselves, so they are who they are, not who they think somebody thinks they ought to be, but they are who they are.

**MK:** Wheeling sort of permits people to be that way? (845)

**BH:** Yes. I think it stimulates creativity. I really do, or it did anyway. I don't know how much is left. I am getting old, and I am getting cranky maybe.

**MK:** Does that have something to do with its position on the river? Are there any geographical factors in what you are talking about?

**BH:** **Well, it was a boom town historically.** The B&O western terminus was here, the National Road came here, the river, so this was a big jumping off place to the west. They made nails, cut nail factory in the world is still down here. If you were going west, you got cloth to make clothes with, you got nails to build your home with. It took china to eat off of, pots and pans, all that stuff was out of here. Stifel calico was a big thing. I don't know what the successor to that is, maybe Indian Head Mills or something, but those were huge businesses. The tobacco industry here--down at Bloch Brothers they had 1,000 women cutting stems off of stuff down there. There was a big stogie industry here, big tobacco industry. You would go into the McClure Hotel, and they would have maybe 20 different cigars that were made here. [ [Return to Top](#) ]

**MK:** That many different kinds?

**BH:** Oh, yes. There were a lot of them. They were all hand-rolled and all that sort of stuff. **I remember once,** we were selling a house, and down in South Wheeling there were all these rolling tables where they rolled cigars, and put them in molds and did things like that, and then these boxes--and I said, "These boxes are an odd thickness."(870) And the guy was actually a bootlegger, and he put a pint or half a pint of booze in the cigar box, and then put a layer of cigars over them, and that is how they were distributing booze. I know during Prohibition there were all sorts of elaborate things here to--there were secret rooms and booze that was walled up. I remember one time they knew that this booze had been walled up in the 20s, and the house was sold and they tore the wall down, and there was all these beautiful cases of wine, liqueurs, and it was all bad. All the corks had dried up. There wasn't a good bottle left. Some of the bottles were beautiful, but the stuff was all bad. [ [Return to Top](#) ] I can't think of anything more. If I do . . .

**MK:** You didn't mention breweries I don't think, did you?

**BH:** I don't know to much about the breweries. The Raymond brewery was a big one. They built the Wheeling Steel Building. Schmulbach was the other one. (883)

**MK:** Schmulbach, was he the one that built a bridge across the river, too.

**BH: I don't know. He had a big place out at Roney's Point.** The Raymond was a--Do you know where the Elks Club is right up the street, well, across the street is a parking lot, and behind the parking lot is a very narrow building that is made of red stone, that whole mansion was built of red stone imported from Germany, and that was an auditorium, that where their pool was, in that building. Another thing I remember, they had a tower that went up, you know those half towers, sort of Victorian-type thing, and at the top was the ballroom, and there was an ante room and that was where the poker room was, and the tower was just big enough to accommodate a poker table with eight players and room for a waiter to walk around the back. [ [Return to Top](#) ] Details.(905)

**MK:** We can't get any very straight story, we haven't been able to get a very straight story about the Urban Renewal in this town. Do you remember much about that?

**BH:** No, I don't. A lot of people could tell you about that. Arch Riley, Sr. could. Arnold Lazarus could. You would get two different versions probably.

**CK:** Arnold Lazarus?

**BH:** Yes.

**CK:** Who is he?

**BH:** He has an advertising company down on 12th and Water.

**MK:** Are they sort of the architects of it?

**BH:** Arch was one of the prime movers in that with Bill Duncan and George Sippley. Duncan and Sippley are both dead.

**MK:** Arch Riley, Sr.?

**BH:** Yes. He is an attorney here in town; the Riley building.

**MK:** He was the prosecutor though?

**BH:** He was also the prosecutor.

**CK:** Lazarus?

**BH:** Lazarus is an advertising agency. Marketing agent. He was a reporter at that time, and I think he did a lot of writing about it.

[ **ATTENTION:** I was unable to verify the spelling of Bill "Lias". My mother, who lived then and has mentioned his name to me previously, told me that she remembers it was spelled this way, but I have been unable to verify this. Also, the name of one of the large breweries in Wheeling, Schmulbach, is mentioned again, but again, I cannot find this in writing. I could not understand the last name of Mr. Hogan's high school friend who had the going-away party in Short Creek. I left a blank. Thanks. -jcs ]