

Transcription of RPL ORAL HISTORIES, for Rockford Public Library

Subject: *Stuart Ralston*, **Tape No. 8 (Call # ARC R 977.331 R164M)**

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Interviewer: Joanne Reid

Q: Well, Stuart, we have done a lot of talking together. We have covered your early life in Caledonia and your college education and early career and your many years affiliated with the furniture industry in Rockford. One thing I haven't heard about is your personal family life since you were an adult. Would you like to share some of that?

A: Well, my family life is pretty much the story of everybody else's. I came to Rockford in 1914, and in 1917 I married Ann Sheldon [Kjellgren] who lived over on Seminary Street and was a sister of Martin Sheldon [Kjellgren - cashier of Third National Bank] and other members of the Sheldon [Kjellgren] family, while I was a member of the Second Officers Training Camp at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

On January 13, 1918, I sailed for France...During the latter part of the year of 1918, while Ann was driving to pick up people who came to visit their sick sons in Camp Grant, [she] contracted the very virulent disease prevalent at that time known as the flu epidemic, and she died on October 17, 1918. I came back from France in 1919 in September and on my arrival back was made electrical engineer of the Rockford Interurban Railway Company and the Rockford Traction Company.

Five years later, in 1923, I married Lucy Brearley, a [sister] of Walter and Ann Brearley [of Brearley Hosiery Company] of Rockford. We were married for 42 years, and she died in May of 1965. We have one daughter, our only child, Barbara, and she now has four children. She graduated from Smith College on a scholarship from the International Scholarship [Educational] Association in New York. She was granted a scholarship to the Sorbonne in Paris, where she attended school for two years. After that, she worked for the MSA, the Mutual Service Act in Paris, and while there met an Italian captain by the name of Marcello Franchini.

They were married in Rome in 1952 and later moved to the United States and now in 1975 are living in Wilmette [Illinois] where they operate an exclusive boutique. They have four children,

one boy and three girls. The boy's name is Alessandro, the older girl's name is Luisa, and the next one is Nicole, and the youngest is Elisabetta. Sandro and Luisa are in Connecticut College at the present time. The other two girls are in New Trier High School.

Q: Stuart, I know that you were awarded the "Service Above Self" award by the Rotary Club in 1973 for the contributions to the Rockford community life that you have made. And would you like to tell me what it is that you have done in your life here in Rockford that would lead to you receiving that particular award?

A: Well, the things that I have given much time to during my life, particularly in Rockford, have been very gratifying, and as I look back on my life in this city and for which I have given many hours. I was president of the Winnebago County Tuberculosis Sanitarium board for ten years, which is the arm of the cure of tuberculosis, falling to the lot of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors. I served on that board for roughly 20 years.

In 1925, I was president of the University Club of Rockford and from 1928 to 1932 I was president of the Blackhawk Area Council of Boy Scouts. I was past president of the Argyle Gun Club and officer of the Rockford Country Club, chairman of the board and treasurer of the Second Congregational Church, member of the Board of Supervisors of Winnebago County, president [chairman] of the Red Cross Society of Rockford, [and] president of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association.

In 1948 and 1949, I was president of the Rockford Rotary Club, and I spent roughly ten years as electrical engineer of the Rockford Interurban Railway Company. I was president of the Roscoe Electric Company and the [Grimes Pass] Hydro Electric Power Company of Idaho, and was several times president of the Rockford Burns Club, the oldest social organization in the city [organized 1859]. And one time representative of the Rockford Electric Company in its - in a rate case with the city.

Q: Stuart, would you tell me a little bit about that rate case?

A: Well, the rate case developed from the activities of Mayor Bloom, who was Mayor of Rockford at the time, and the city council, who felt that the charges made to the city were

exorbitant. These rates affected the electricity used not only by the city but also by the customers in the town.

Q: This was charges like on a monthly electric bill?

A: Yes. And after a great deal of haggling over the thing, it was finally decided that a board of three people would be chosen: one to represent the city, one to represent the electric company, and one as a third arbitrator. So, the decision was made, and I was chosen to represent the Rockford Electric Company. Ray Wantz was the arbitrator and O. G. Nelson represented the city.

We held many meetings trying to arrive at an equitable decision and finally did arrive at such a decision, and it was accepted by the mayor and the city council. And that terminated the case, resulting in a substantial savings to the city and to the customers as well, in the city of Rockford, but proving to be entirely satisfactory to the electric company as well, as their business was growing at that time by leaps and bounds.

Q: Stuart, was that just the three of you who were doing the arbitrating?

A: Well, of course that wouldn't be the final say, but we met and finally made a decision, which we presented to the city council and the mayor, and which proved to be satisfactory to them, and it was accepted, which was a very fine thing for all concerned to get the matter behind us.

Q: Did that take a lot of time?

A: Well, we met many, many times on the rate case trying to arrive at an adequate decision.

Q: Over a period of how long?

A: Well, it was over a period of two or three months. We found Mr. O. G. Nelson to be a tremendously conscientious man representing the city, and he stood his ground trying to get the best deal he could for the city, and I think he was successful.

Q: He was representing the people of the city?

A: Well, he was representing the, yes, the people of the city.

Q: And can you tell us anything about the rates at all?

A: No, I can't remember a thing. I know it resulted in, as I recall – and this can be entirely an inaccurate figure – resulted in the saving of about one hundred thousand dollars the first year after it was put into effect, but this may be inaccurate.

Q: Savings on the part of the city?

A: Yeah.

Q: Why was Mr. Nelson chosen to represent the city?

A: Well, Mr. O. G. Nelson was one of the outstanding men of the community and was recognized for his fairness and his toughness in dealing with all problems. And I think probably he was an excellent choice made by the city to represent them because, certainly, he didn't give any ground that he didn't think was justifiable.

Q: Was he active in the political realm?

A: No, he was a tremendously successful businessman. He was in many ventures and started some of the original factories that have become very successful in the years that followed. So, he was really an excellent choice, in my mind. I have always admired O. G. Nelson ever since, for his fairness and his toughness and his native ability for carrying on the discussions during our meetings, as they were carried on.

Q: It seems to me that you look back at that with good memories.

A: Oh, it was a very pleasant experience, and was very – I felt very fortunate in having been chosen to take part in so important a thing in the life of a city.

Q: A bit of a challenge maybe?

A: Well, of course, that's one side of it.

Q: I was certainly impressed with that long list of things that you have been active in, and it looks to me like they can be divided into several different areas. I noticed that there are several

things that are of a social nature, a couple of things that are rather ethnic in your Scotch background, some business affiliations, and some social agency things as well as your church and political. So, I am kind of curious, do you feel that it is important to have a well-rounded life?

A: Well, of course, this list is rather interesting, but it isn't a list that is unusual of men of the city of Rockford, many of whom could make a list twice as long as this and on more important causes. The thing is that I have taken the time from a busy life to do these things, and it is very gratifying to me as I look back on them now. So, I don't present them in any way as competitive with other men who have done much more in the town than I have. But I really quote them at your request to make the record complete of what my life in Rockford has been.

Q: I would like to hear you comment on some of those because they are unique to you and you would know a great deal about them. For example, how long have you been a member of the Rockford Rotary?

A: I have been a member of the Rockford Rotary for forty years. I was elected to membership in 1935.

Q: Do you remember why you chose to join that?

A: Well, not really. I think the – it is quite a compliment to be asked to join Rotary because their qualifications are that only one man in each industry can be a member of Rotary with the additional member who can be chosen by the organization themselves as an additional active member of the Rotary Club. So, it was with some pleasure and pride that I accepted the nomination at that time.

Q: I was interested that you were the first president of the Blackhawk Area [Council of] Boy Scouts, which might mean that you had something to do with the formation of that regional.

A: I got into the Blackhawk organization through the financial end. I was treasurer for a year or two before I became president and was also active in other departments but, the thing that I remember most was the years 1928 and 1929 of which has left an everlasting impression on my mind as well as everybody who was living and in business at that time, because the

depth of the Depression was just starting then and reached its depth a few years later. But the business of getting enough money to pay the scoutmaster here, whose name was George Driesbaugh, proved to be a tremendous job. We had a number of counties here in northern Illinois to look after. The raising of money was quite a job and took many miles of driving to get enough to pay George Driesbaugh a meager salary.

This continued for the four years I was president of the organization, but during that time there was some very interesting things took place. We sponsored what was known as the Lone Scout member [program] of the Boy Scout organization, which means that a boy on a farm who would find it very difficult to come into meetings from a far distance, could study and become a part of the scout organization although far away. And it proved to be a tremendously interesting attempt at spreading the scout movement and resulted in the big jamboree held out on the McCormack farm, where the head scout master, James Fisk, and Dr. Snyder, who was his assistant, and also Lord Hampton from London, who headed the Boy Scout movement in England. And they were all here for that jamboree, which after the jamboree, wound up in a very fine dinner at the Nelson Hotel. I remember that as one of the highlights of my life with scouting.

There were other very interesting things, visiting the different troops and the different headquarters in the area. And I have great praise for George Driesbaugh, who, during that very, very precarious period, was able to carry on and do a job that I think was well done.

Q: It interests me that you were that active in the Boy Scouts when you had a daughter. You must have had some previous affiliation.

A: Well, the tremendous good that the movement does has always appealed to me as being outstanding in the public service work of the country because the start that it gives boys to develop some kind of natural ability to do things on their own is, I think, a vital part of a boy's life. So, it's for that reason that I think I got into scouting.

Q: Did you start out being a scout master?

A: No, I didn't. I came through the financial end to start with. They were in serious trouble at the time, and I stepped in and lent it a hand to work them through those very bad years from

1928 to 1932. And then I was succeeded by a very capable man by the name of John Ralston from Dixon, who was a cousin [and president] of the Reynold's Wire Works there and who took over and was president for four years succeeding me.

Q: I would like to hear you talk a bit about the ethnic things. The Argyle Gun Club, how about that?

A: The Argyle Gun Club is just a group of men who, roughly a hundred years ago, started a gun club just as a social event. And a hundred years ago the game was very plentiful in the country, and their first method of carrying on the shoot was to choose up sides, giving each animal and bird that they might shoot a number of points, and at the end of the shoot they would bring in the carnage and count the different points. And the one that had the most points were the recipients of a dinner given a week or two later, known as the hunt supper, which has been carried on ever since.

The unsavory part of the kill, after two or three years, proved to be too much for the members. So, that was given up and they then took to shooting at glass balls. And later on shot with rifles at targets, and now shoot once a year at fifteen clay pigeons. And the one that shoots the most of the fifteen is the winner of the badge and also of a painting that was painted displaying four interesting points of the life of the community [club]. First, a clay pigeon in flight; second, a painting of the badge, which is a silver badge, worn twice a year: once at the shoot, if he cares to, and the other time at the hunt supper. The other is a field of fire, which is the Lewis Greenlee farm on which Roger and Wayne Greenlee still live. The fourth quadrant of the painting is a highlander in full regalia playing the pipes.

This [painting] goes with the badge each year, and it's a rather interesting addition to the prize because it gives something for the winner of the prize to look at once in a while, rather than have the silver badge put into the safety box and not seen again for a year.

Q: It's usually up on the wall of the member's home, isn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you want to tell [us] where they got that painting?

A: No.

Q: You don't. You'll just let me do that? (Stuart laughs) I happen to know you painted that, Stuart.

A: Yeah, I painted that. I really painted that, and I had no idea of doing anything but keeping it. And they had heard about it, and so at the next shoot they asked if I wouldn't bring it up. And I did bring it up, and they announced that they had decided to keep it. So, I said, "Alright, it's yours."

Q: You mentioned the clay pigeons; each member shoots at five clay pigeons?

A: No, each man in the club shoots five clay pigeons three times during the day. He shoots a total of fifteen birds – fifteen clay pigeons. And sides are chosen by age: forty and below, and forty and above are the two teams. There's quite some lively competition as the shoot wears on to see who's winning, like a political election.

Q: Do you still have the hunt suppers?

A: The hunt suppers are carried on exactly like they used to be a hundred years ago. And it consists of cooking oysters in a great big kettle in water. They're served in water and you apply whatever else you want to the oysters. The usual decision is to add cream and butter and salt. And I defy anybody to find finer oysters than those are. That's followed then by sliced ham and great biscuits, with hors d'oeuvres of olives and celery and other things that are customary for that sort of thing. Winds up with the cake, a great big cake that's cut into squares with the design on each piece of cake that's done by one of the ladies in the neighborhood – what's her name?

Q: Joyce Russ?

A: Yeah. Out on the... [old Joe Barnes' farm.]

Q: ...It's William Russ.

A: Yes. So, it makes for a very enjoyable outing for everybody. And it's growing now because there's a bunch of young people that have come up and are at the age that they're interested in such things, so the club is taking on new life with the advent of new members.

Q: It's a very traditional thing, isn't it?

A: Oh heavens, it's quite a thing in the community!

Q: But there used to be two gun clubs?

A: There used to be three! There used to be one at the Wyman School District and one in Argyle, and then this one.

Q: They've all affiliated into one, and the one that had a dance is no...

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Q: ...I remember one time when you and Lucy were on the committee at our house at Argyle. That must have been not too long before she died.

A: Yes, I remember that evening very well, and in those days the hunt supper was always held at one of the bigger homes in the community where they could handle roughly seventy-five people which were generally in attendance. And that required the moving of all the furniture out of the downstairs of the house and moving it into wherever they could put it, upstairs or out on the porch or whatever.

And then the whole downstairs was set in tables or space made available for the serving of the typical dinner that was served all through these years. So, it became a very big job to get the dishes from the church and get the folding chairs from the church, which were set around, and the folding tables from the church, which were necessary to supply the tables and to support the food that was served. And then, after the dinner was over, there was an excellent program which was carried on through the same format as it was in the years gone by: namely, there is a – what do they call that paper?

Q: The newspaper?

A: The Gun Club Newspaper, and then there is another paper given, too, known as Current Events where the members of the club and their families are lambasted in one form or another and stories told about them, mostly untrue. (Laughs)

Q: I think they've put a committee of two people on to write the newspaper, and they normally divide that up into two parts and they are free to put their own name on the paper. Sometimes it's called "Current Events" and sometimes it's called the "Gossip Section"...

A: Yes, "Gossip Section." Yes, that's...

Q: ...but there is great fun in taking jokes out of joke books and...

A: ...yes, and applying it to people that are there.

Q: Yes. The very first time I ever went to that I wasn't even married, and I was the brunt of one of those jokes. And I distinctly remember that if a fellow brought a girl to the hunt supper, that was a true sign that there was some very, very serious thread to that romance. And I guess that tradition has still held true, because even now the fellows won't bring girls to the hunt supper.

A: Well, I think the thing that makes it so successful is that they're a fine bunch of people that attend, and they've all been very closely associated during their life because the activities of all of them are pretty much the same and revolving around the Willow Creek Presbyterian Church up there. They know each other so well and to me being in a way kind of an outsider, not living in the community, it's very gratifying to go up there and spend the day with a bunch of high-grade men, as I consider them to be, a day spent with very little of the unseemly that often takes place in gatherings of men like that. Current interest in public things is as prominent as anything else in the discussions during the lunch hour where we all eat in the old harness shed on the Greenlee farm.

Q: Still in touch with the old days, isn't it?

A: Well, it's very enjoyable to me. I suppose I never could get away from the days in a small town, and I'm not sorry to admit that I still look forward to the shoot on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Q: How about the Robert Burns Club, Stuart?

A: Well, the Robert Burns Club is another club that I have been a member of for many, many years and a club that I have enjoyed tremendously. And I have given some time to it as president, and I try to go to every one of the annual meetings, which now is approaching the 117th annual meeting of the Rockford [Robert] Burns Club, which is the oldest social organization in the city of Rockford.

As it happens now, as we have grown older, much older, that a new group of men, some of whom have just come from Scotland, have taken over and made the club much more active and much more interesting than it has been for a number of years. And it is quite gratifying to go to the annual dinner and hear the pipes and watch the highland fling and other dances that the girls put on and then hear the speech to the immortal memory of Robert Burns and the other speeches that might be given on the subject and especially singing by local members of the club, who in one or two instances have excellent voices and sing the old Scotch songs with the proper English [Scotch] dialect.

Q: Is there a dance that goes along with that banquet, Stuart?

A: Well, now there is a dance. As a matter of fact, they had a big dance the other night, but that is separate from the annual meeting, and they said there was something like five hundred people at it.

Q: It is still part of the Burns Club, though?

A: Oh, it is the Burns Club that sponsors the thing.

Q: That's the Tartan Ball?

A: The Tartan Ball, that's what it is. And they are raising money, you know, for the pipe band and for other things that they are interested in. And they said there were about five hundred people there at fifteen dollars a plate. What a change from the old days of the Scots!

Q: Well, then how about the meal itself? Is there anything traditional about that?

A: I don't – I suppose there is, but not being there, I can't answer that question.

Q: Oh. I was there once when they had haggis.

A: Yes, they did have haggis once, but that's too difficult to get, too difficult to make. There are very few places in this country that make haggis. As a matter of fact, they use the ordinary things for food and just talk about the haggis.

Q: Oh. (Laughs) You don't want to describe haggis?

A: Well, haggis is oatmeal and a lot of other things cooked in the stomach of a sheep.

Q: It has a very unusual flavor...

A: Yes, it has a very strong flavor.

Q: ...It reminds me of liver pudding or something.

A: That's a good explanation of it.

Q: I was wondering how you got on some of these other things, the TB board for example. Were you asked to be on that?

A: Well, I was a member of the Board of Supervisors for some eight years...

Q: That's an elected position?

A: Yes, that's an elected job, the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors. And I was on the [Tuberculosis] committee, and then when my term expired on the Board of Supervisors, they asked me to go along as president of the [TB] board, which I did, and I acted in that capacity for some ten years afterwards.

And that was the care required for patients in the county outside of the city. You see, the big tuberculosis organization was the Rockford Tuberculosis Association, and this took care of the patients that lived outside [inside?] of the city. And there were not anywhere near the number of patients in the county that there were in the city, but we had to keep track of them and keep a record of them and all the rest of it. But the work wasn't a job that you did daily because the doctor in charge of the sanitarium was very capable and did a good job in looking after the patients.

Q: Did the county patients go to the sanitarium?

A: Well, we were really the ones that were there from the outside. The city owned and controlled the municipal sanitarium.

Q: On Parkview Avenue?

A: On Parkview Avenue. And we were there by paying a fee for each of the members. But we had to find out about the people who might be subjected to tuberculosis and have them examined and then, if they proved to be tubercular, to get them into the sanitarium and to pay for their keep and that sort of thing.

Q: Okay. That sanitarium is no longer either.

A: No. That sanitarium was given up because the care given tubercular patients in recent years has reduced the cases to very few and it hardly paid to continue to operate the sanitarium.

Q: Now, I notice that you also belong to the University Club and the Rockford Country Club.

A: I've been a member of the Rockford Country Club for fifty years; I was elected in 1925...and that has been a great deal of pleasure to our family because Barbara played golf, Lucy played bridge, and I played golf. And it's been a very happy connection with the social life of the city. I was a member of the board for six years and vice president for a year or two and enjoyed the whole thing very much, even though we went through the valley and the shadow of death in the depth of the Depression, trying to keep afloat, and the installation of a swimming pool saved the club. People began coming back in droves after the swimming pool was in so that their kids would get a chance to learn to swim. So, that's the Rockford Country Club in a word.

Q: How about the University Club?

A: The University Club of Rockford was a small club when I first joined it. I went through the different offices of the club and finally followed Bill Lathrop as president. During my year we spent a great deal of time in trying to locate a permanent home for the club, which was not accomplished until the next year when they took over the old Mid-day Club quarters above the

five and ten cent store on West State Street in the 100 block upstairs. The club was there until they moved up to the old Duncan Forbes home on North Main where they are still located.

Q: Do you know what year that move took place?

A: Well, I was president in the year 1925, so that move took place in – then we went into the upstairs quarters of the Mid-day Club in 1926 and moved up to the Forbes home on North Main some years afterwards, but I can't tell you when.

Q: It must have been in maybe the 1940s?

A: Possibly – I don't remember.

Q: What's the purpose of the University Club?

A: Well, it's substantially a luncheon club, I think, much like the Mid-day Club and, oh, it's a place where men who have gone to college can get together at noon or for dinner at night. I think they serve dinner meals there now, to talk over old times or business or it's pretty much a business club with a college angle attached to it.

Q: Was there anything that happened in the five years you were on the Board of Supervisors that you would like to talk about?

A: Yes, there was an attempt made during the time that I was on there to tear down the old court house, and a bunch of younger men on the board decided that we ought to look into the matter very carefully because we couldn't see where the building was about to fall down as some of them contended. So, we got some engineers out from Chicago, and they went over the building with a fine-tooth comb and reported that the foundations of the court house were three feet thick and as far as they could see the court house could easily stand for another hundred years. And that ended the thing until – and as a matter of fact it saved the county from spending that money for a matter of, well, almost fifty years. That would be from 1920, well, say about 1930 to 1970. That would be 20 [40!] years.

Q: So, that would be forty? From '30 to '70 would be 40 years.

A: Yes, it's some 40 years. So, we did a good service there.

We also were presented one morning, when we came to a meeting, with a one million dollar bond issue to be put on the county to improve county roads. And at that time, as far as we younger men could see, the roads in Winnebago County were all in pretty good shape, and we didn't think this was the time to spend that amount of money. But it was voted through in the morning, and in the afternoon we had one of the men who voted for it ask for a reconsideration, and in the afternoon we voted it down. The next year the Depression came on, and we voted two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for poor relief, thinking it would last a year or a year and a half, and in ninety days it was gone. So, that was the way of it with my time on the board.

Q: Was the Second Congregational Church an important part of your life?

A: Yes. I've been a member of the Second Congregational Church ever since I came from Caledonia because my connections there in Caledonia were Congregational. It's been a grand old church. It's had its ups and downs, and I think that they were going into a greater era than we have been in for many years with the advent of a new preacher who has come to us from Medford, Oregon. He will take charge of the – preach his first sermon on the first or second Sunday in December [1975].

Q: Have you gone through quite a few pastors in the time you have been there?

A: Well, it's just that the pastors that have been there since I was there – I was treasurer under John Gordon and two or three years under Joe Cleveland and then Cleveland was followed by a Reverend Midgley who now has accepted the Central Church in Hawaii, so he has left and the new man, whose name is – Flynn, Pat Flynn [will take his place].

Q: Well, I'd like to go on, Stuart, and ask you about your hobby that I have been hearing about: your painting. When and how did you get into this?

A: Well, my experience in painting started back in 1949 when Shaler Smith and maybe one other friend of ours signed up for a course in the art association, and we, Harry Green and I, decided that we would join too, and probably drop out in a very short time. But we became interested in it, and we took that and went all through that particular course and then took

another one the next year, and we've been painting ever since, mostly privately with private instructors.

And so you see that my interest in painting extends back quite a way; from '49 to '69 would be 20 years and to '75 would be 26 years. So, I've been painting 26 years, mostly in class, not painting much at home although I have now, since I have retired, done quite a little painting at home and will continue to do painting at home now. Although, I give a lot of credit to Dave Wolf, under whom I studied for 15 years at his home on Fairfield Avenue in West Rockford.

Q: I have had the pleasure of taking a tour through your art gallery upstairs, Stuart, and I have noticed that you do a lot of still life and many buildings. You must have a particular interest in architecture.

A: Well, not so much that, but – well, maybe so. The buildings that in your travels that strike your fancy you take photographs of and then when you get back home you translate them to canvass. That has been the principle thing – that I have made many paintings that I have given away. And what I do there is, for instance, anybody that has a yacht, I take a picture of that and paint a picture for them and then give it to them.

Q: Ah....

A: A number of people have that type of painting.

Q: And the ones that you have kept are paintings that have been of particular meaning to you, such as the one of your grandfather and your conception of the Gleaner, the sailing vessel that the first people came over from Scotland to Argyle and Guilford; the building where your daughter was married in Rome; an enlargement of a smaller painting that you have always enjoyed having in your home. I particularly remember those as of personal interest to you.

A: Yes, that's, uh, the still lifes that I've probably done my best work on were still lifes that were set up in the studio of Dave Wolf and other people had drawn them, too. So, they were, in my opinion, rather difficult compositions and took a lot of time, but once they're finished they're worth being careful with and worth taking the time to do a satisfactory job on them.

Q: Also, on your living room wall is a painting of the Ralston coat-of-arms. Where did you get hold of that?

A: Well, the coat-of-arms came over from Scotland with our grandfather, and they were painted on a piece of tin about 10 inches by 12 inches, and I've enlarged that to a 16 inches by 20 inches canvas, and I have that in my home, which attracts a lot of attention when people come in.

Q: Very beautifully done in bronze and yellow tones, and that's of your particular branch of the Ralston family, do you think?

A: Well, yes, that's the – I trust it is because it came over from Scotland, and they had it there in the family for many years because it was – there were places on [it] where the painting was chipped, been painted for so many years that the paint would get hard and then chip off, and I filled in those little spots that had fallen off before I returned it.

Q: I think you also mentioned earlier in our recording that you used your painting in the furniture industry in painting faces on your clocks.

A: Yes, we did that in the days when we couldn't get dials from Germany. We had to resort to anything we could.

Q: What, overall, do you feel about this hobby of yours? Has it been useful to you?

A: The painting? Well, yeah, I think every man, when he's in business or when he's working, should look forward to the day when he retires and get something that he can do when he can't do anything else; when he gets too old to play golf or when he gets too old to do much else. If he has a hobby of some kind, and it doesn't have to be any particular thing, just so he can keep doing it. So that when time gets heavy on his hands he could just start and make up whatever he's proficient at, and that's one of the reasons I stayed with painting so long. It's just because it's something that you can do, and at the present time, I'm making a painting of our old home in Caledonia.

Q: The one that we have in the back of your memoir, incidentally.

A: Yes, it's the one that's in the back of the memoirs, and I'm enlarging that now and making it a fall scene rather than a winter scene.

Q: We're looking at it right now, and it's just in the penciled-in stages.

A: Yes, it's just blocked in now, and I'm ready to begin to paint it now, and I'll have it ready for December first [1975] because I'm going to exhibit it over at the Home Federal Building and Loan Association [show].

Q: Stuart, we have just a couple of minutes left, and I'm anxious to know how you view your life, your hopes, and dreams, and if you achieved them or what you might like to tell some future generations about living.

A: Well, I suppose that everybody comes to the end of his life and looks back and thinks of things that he might have done, but there's no use of that type of retrospect because it's all over, and you can go forward to the end and say, "you've done your best and let it rest," as my mother-in-law used to keep saying, and that's the philosophy I have. I've done the best I could and it's – that's the way it is and, of course, I have some philosophies on people's way of life which are mine, and I'm not preaching that anybody else should follow them.

But my philosophy of life is that the Lord gave us a good body to start out with, and we're crazy not to cherish that body and not to abuse it. And then I think another tremendously important thing in the life of all of us is that if we do have a family, that we consider that it was our responsibility to bring that family into life, and that we should do everything in our power [to see] that they get a good start in life.

And the way of that is that they have a home which is a fortress to them. When they are in trouble or when they get home and are tired, they have a place they can go and know they'll be received and loved and all the rest of it...

[END OF TAPE EIGHT]

(Jo Wald, Transcriptionist, 1975) / (Doug Janicke, Transcriptionist, 2023)