

EI-1363

FULL NAME: ARCHIBALD HIGGINS WEBSTER

BIRTHDATE: April 19th, 1921

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AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 83

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INTERVIEWER: Janet Levine, Ph.D

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: Dennis Zeveloff

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ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE:

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AGE: 3

SHIP:

PORT: Liverpool

RESIDENCES:

- **England: Barrow-in-Furness, Lake District**
- **USA: Reading, PA**

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE:

LEVINE: Today is January the third, the year 2005. I'm here with Archibald Higgins Webster who came from England in 1924 when he was three years of age. And this is Janet Levine from the National Park Service. Okay for the tape, please, would you say again your birth date and where in England you were born?

WEBSTER: I was born April, 19th, 1921, in Barrow-in-Furness, England.

LEVINE: Which you mentioned was the Lake District.

WEBSTER: It's in the Lake District, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay.

WEBSTER: I think it was on Walney Island.

LEVINE: Oh, how do you spell that?

WEBSTER: Off of, off of, uh, the coast--I'm not sure though.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: W-A-L-N-E-Y, I think it was.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. And, let's see, your mother's name?

WEBSTER: Catherine (Pause)

LEVINE: Maiden name?

WEBSTER: Catherine, I think it was Ross-Higgins.

LEVINE: Oh, that's where the Higgins come from.

WEBSTER: Yeah. Or Higgins-Ross, I'm not sure which.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. And how about your father, his name?

WEBSTER: Robert Mason Webster.

LEVINE: And you were the baby in the family--

WEBSTER: Right.

LEVINE: So that means that you had all your brothers and sisters were older.

WEBSTER: Yes, my oldest brother was Robert. He was seventeen-- seventeen --, I think I figured out --, when we came across.

LEVINE: And how about the next one?

WEBSTER: My other brother was Bruce, and he was probably thirfourteen. And then my sister, Rita, was probably seven. Uh, Bruce and Rita were born in Spain.

LEVINE: Okay, why don't you say a little bit about that your father went to Spain first?

WEBSTER: Yeah, he went to Spain --, I think he said --, in 1910, as a plumber. He was a ship-fitter, which was a plumber that did work on ships. And they, a few of the people there in the area, in Scotland, got contracts with the Spanish Navy --, I guess it was --, to work in the naval shipyard there.

LEVINE: Now, had your father been working in Scotland?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, he was in the shipyards there. He had learned his trade there.

LEVINE: I see. So, now, would he go back and forth between England, or did your mother live in Scotland?

WEBSTER: No, they lived in Scotland.

LEVINE: Oh, they lived in Scotland.

WEBSTER: Yeah, they lived in Scotland.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

WEBSTER: And then they -- they-- they went --; he went to Spain, and my mother went to Spain too.

LEVINE: I see. But nobody was Scottish, by birth?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, they were Scotch.

LEVINE: Oh, they were Scotch

WEBSTER: They were Scots, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, they were Scots, okay.

WEBSTER: [interposed]They were Scots, yeah, yeah, yeah. They were born in Arbroath, Scotland.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

WEBSTER: A-R-B-R-O-A-T-H

LEVINE: So, both your mother and father?—

WEBSTER: Yeah—

LEVINE: Scots?

WEBSTER: They were both Scots.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

WEBSTER: Yeah

LEVINE: But were they living in England when you—

WEBSTER: When I was born.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: See that was, see they were in Spain from 1910 to 1919.

LEVINE: I see. And he went there as a plumber—

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: On ships.

WEBSTER: As a ship-fitter, yeah. And he became a superintendent there, at the --- at Dinnety (?) Naval—

LEVINE: Navy yard?

WEBSTER: Navy yard, or ship-pulling yard there. Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. And your two of your --- not your oldest, but the two in the middle were born there.

WEBSTER: They were born in Spain, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

WEBSTER: And then when they returned to England, I was born there.

LEVINE: I see. And so when they returned from Spain, that's when they lived in England.

WEBSTER: In England, in England, yeah, because—

LEVINE: In the Lake ~~te~~ (District?)

WEBSTER: --he had a job there in the shipyard.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: Vicar's shipyard, I think it was. In England.

LEVINE: I see. Was that in Barrow-in-Furness?

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And then, there was a depression at that time in 1919, and, uh, well, they had no work. So he went to Ireland, and worked in Ireland for a while.

LEVINE: In a shipyard?

WEBSTER: In a shipyard there. And then he ---, then he came back. a And he decided ---, according to his letter here ---, he just got an inkling to move to America. And he borrowed a hundred dollars from a friend and made the trip.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And then, uh, the following year he brought the family over.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh. Well he really moved around then.

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, they traveled around quite a bit.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Okay, so, let's see. s So your oldest brother, who was seventeen when you came—

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Had he, had he, was he like finished with school and working—

WEBSTER: Yeah. ---

LEVINE: -- at that point?

WEBSTER: Yeah, yeah. w When he came here he started working as a, uh, draftsman, 'cause he had finished technical school in Eng—in—in England.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And uh, I would imagine that—that—that would be equivalent of a, uh, a— a local college here.

LEVINE: I would think a community college at least.

WEBSTER: [interposed] You know, yeah, a community college, yeah. And he started work as a draftsman there.

LEVINE: I see. Uhm.

WEBSTER: And he was, he was actually working before they moved, hHe was working in the shipyard as a draftsman.

LEVINE: Draftsman, uh-huh, yeah. Now did your mother or father ever tell you, or can you tell by your father's account there, why they left when they did? You sort of—

WEBSTER: Well, it was because of depression. Yeah, they had no work.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WEBSTER: There was a terrible depression in—in Britain after the war.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay. And did your father see anything of World War I? Was he in any—

WEBSTER: Uh, no. Well he was in Spain, he was in Spain during the whole war.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And he was working on ships?

WEBSTER: Yeah, (coughs) they were building battleships.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WEBSTER: Destroyers and you know.

LEVINE: Now did your mother or father have any relatives in the United States when—

WEBSTER: No.

LEVINE: they came here?

WEBSTER: We had no family here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well gee, that was pretty brave. (laughs)

WEBSTER: Yes (laughs) and I don't think my mother was ever happy here (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh really. Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: No.

LEVINE:- ___ Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah.

WEBSTER: 'Cause she ne—she never took out citizenship. She got her first papers and never finished it.

LEVINE: I see. So when your father came that year before the rest of the family came—

WEBSTER: Mmhmm.

LEVINE: Um, what was it like for your mother? I mean, how did you get along?

WEBSTER: Well, he—he said in (LEVINE coughs) this uh letter here, he was --- he—he sent uh, twenty dollars, --- I think it was twenty dollars a week -- home.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: You know, from his pay, which was not much more than that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And uh, that's how they got along, I guess. I, uh, I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: It must've been tough.

LEVINE: Right. And what did your father do and where did he settle when he came?

WEBSTER: Well he, uh, landed in New York, of course _, a And, and then, uh he traveled to Philadelphia because, uh, he had, uh, some in there with somebody.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: And uh, he mo--ved, he traveled to Philadelphia and he worked around there for quite a few years.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: Not Wwell, a year -- I should say --, not uh quite a few years.

LEVINE: Right, because you didn't go to Philadelphia.

WEBSTER: [interposed] Yeah. No, we came right to Reading, Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Okay.

WEBSTER: But he had constant here how he [not understood]. -- Hhe lost his tools --, Hhe had, um, a toolbox and he said, uh (coughs) --, according to this --, that uh, it was probably too heavy for them to steal. sSo they stole his bag with his clothes so, and the only clothes he had was what he had, some work clothes he had in his toolbox.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: On his way to Philadelphia. So he landed in Philadelphia. had

LEVINE: You mean on the train, like?

WEBSTER: It must have been at one of the stations, I guess --, or on the train, some place they stole it. So he landed in uh Philadelphia with only his toolbox.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

WEBSTER: And then he made friends there and, and he changed uh, to domestic plumbing then.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: You know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: He didn't work bark (?) in the shipyard down there.

LEVINE: Well apparently he found work

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, they found work, and he must've made out, ah, all right for the time, you know, 'til --- and then, uh, he moved to Reading.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: and found a house for—for us when we came over.

LEVINE: Do you know why he went to Reading?

WEBSTER: Uh, well things got tough in Philadelphia, job wise --- a And somebody told him—they had a big strike in Philadelphia—and, uh, the eat business agent or somebody in the local told him, um, they could get him some work in Reading. s So he came to Reading, and found work there.

LEVINE: So in other words, was he in the Plumber's Union?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, he was --- he was a --- a great trade union man.

LEVINE: Oh really?

WEBSTER: Yeah. From Britain over to here.

LEVINE: Oh he was [not understood] in Britain?

WEBSTER: Yeah, yeah he was president in uh the local in Reading for quite a few years.

LEVINE: Well I'm wondering, could he be a union member before he became a citizen?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah

LEVINE: Yeah?

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So when you first got here, you went right to Reading?

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now probably your father came through Ellis Island—

WEBSTER: in '23, oh yeah. Yeah. Then we, then we came, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. And do you remember, did anybody ever tell you, or is it written there, did you travel steerage, do you know?

WEBSTER: I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WEBSTER: Probably, it probably was either steerage or third class—or something, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: But I know that the uh, my brothers used to talk about how they used to run around the ship, you know. They used to go all over the place, and—

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. And did your brothers ever talk about anything about Ellis Island?

WEBSTER: Uh, the only thing I can remember them talking about was the fact that they were kept there a day, overnight because I think my, the, my, uh, the younger brother had uh, an eye infection or something and they kept him overnight.

LEVINE: For observation?

WEBSTER: For observation, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: But I don't re-, I don't recall much of anything being said about the place.

LEVINE: I see.

WEBSTER: I couldn't really say anything about that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did any of your brothers or sisters ever visit later on?

WEBSTER: E-E-Ellis Island?

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: No, not that I know of, no, I'm sure they didn't.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Okay so you settled in Reading now were there um, do you think there were other immigrant families in Reading?

WEBSTER: Oh my God yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER:-We lived, we moved into an area where it was uh, Italian and Polish (coughs) and uh, well some of the Slovak countries. We had an awful lot of immigrants there. A lot of Italian was spoken at home, Polish, and uh, in fact, uh, I remember it must have been when I was in probably, second grade maybe, or first grade we had a family move next door, came right from Germany. No one spoke English. That was quite interesting (laughs).

LEVINE: Well, how was school for you? I mean—

WEBSTER:-Well, I didn't have any trouble because I was so young, by the time I went, started school, you know, I didn't know anything else.

LEVINE: You didn't have an accent.

WEBSTER: No, I had no accent. Now my, uh older [not understood] didn't go to school, he went to work. And my sister probably was, she would have went to second grade maybe, and uh, she wouldn't have any trouble, I

guess. My—my brother, uh, he left, he must've quit school in, uh, Junior High, as I remember, he went to work, to help the family because we didn't have any money.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So um, in other words, you were in Reading when the Depression hit.

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And how did that affect you and your family?

WEBSTER: Well, it was pretty tough. I can remember, uh, we had two, we lived in a small house, we only had three bedrooms and we had two boarders, I remember that.

LEVINE: Oh, tell—

WEBSTER: I can remember that. I-I-I don't have any recollection of anything about them.

LEVINE: But you know you had them

WEBSTER: But—but I know we had them. Yeah, we had two boarders. And, uh, they were both, uh, uh, I'm trying to think of—Charlie Duessel[ph] was the old, one of them and the other one all I remember is Donald.

LEVINE: Were they also from—

WEBSTER: They were, they were, they were British, yeah I think, I think they were (knock on door) English.

LEVINE: Okay, we're pausing. [Pause]

LEVINE: So, did your oldest brother stay in Reading too? The whole family, or he went where?

WEBSTER: Uh, well he stayed, uh, he stayed with us until uh he got married in uh '29. And then shortly after that he moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania. He went with, uh, he was working with Mack manufacturing then, Mack trucks.

LEVINE: Oh. And did he, was he a draftsman, I mean is that—

WEBSTER: Well, he was an engineer up there.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WEBSTER: For them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, great.

WEBSTER: And uh, well he was them 'til he retired.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about your father? Did he stay as a plumber?

WEBSTER: He stayed as a plumber until uh, I think he was seventy-two when he [not understood], when he did his last job. He was seventy-two, he worked in the tool room at uh, a big job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And he was, and then he retired.

LEVINE: Yeah. What was his personality like, your father?

WEBSTER: The best (laughs).

LEVINE: (laughs) The best, the best.

WEBSTER: He was a wonderful man.

LEVINE: What about him was so good?

WEBSTER: He was a brogue. You know, a good Scottish Brogue. Both my mother and him—

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: and him were, had a nice Brogue. But he was an awful nice man.

LEVINE: And was he happy he had come to this country?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, yeah. He was perfectly happy. And he went back, uh, visiting in, in '54, uh, [not understood] I think it was '54 (coughs). And the last time he was over I'm not sure when it was. Let's see, uh, it was past [not understood]. This one, this '59. And then he went over again in, uh, yeah, that's '59 he was over.

LEVINE: And did he stay?

WEBSTER: He went over in '54

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: and then he went over again in '59.

LEVINE: And did he stay for any length of time?

WEBSTER: Yeah, he stayed, oh I guess, about 6 or 8 weeks. Don't you think, Holly?

HOLLY: [not understood]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: 'Cause I remember, we'd been over there in New York to pick him up when he flew in, uh, in '59.

LEVINE: And he went just because—

WEBSTER: To visit his family and people, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, I know we were talking about the boarders, and I wanted to ask you, did your mother cook for them?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, they lived with us, yeah. Now I don't remember them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: Uh, you know, I couldn't visualize them at all.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: But I, I remember we had them for quite a while. She must've worked real hard at it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: You know that, that with all the kids and, and everything and two boarders in this little house.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WEBSTER: But, uh—

LEVINE: And I think we should mention your, your parents were older than most, forty, forty one.

WEBSTER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: when they came over with the rest of the family.

WEBSTER: That's right.

LEVINE: And now, you mentioned your father was perfectly happy here, and what about your mother?

WEBSTER: I don't think she was ever happy here.

LEVINE: Why do you—

WEBSTER: I mean we had friends here, you know, she had, we had Scottish friends, English friends, in Reading, and uh, she just never was happy with it, because I think, mainly, they had left Spain, realize, they lived in Spain from 1910 to 1919. They had servants there. Uh, they had a nurse maid and they had a cook and they had another maid. Uh, all the time she was there. And she was young. She would have been, what, twenty six, twenty seven, she'd been twenty seven and she was young, she had her

own maid there. (coughs)They had a big clique of people, they had hundreds of pictures of that, of picnics, you know they [not understood] in the hills, and whatnot with remember that Connie? When we uh, when my dad died we cleaned out the house and there were hundreds of pictures there and nobody knew who they were.

LEVINE: I see. Were there, uh, a lot of expatriates, I mean were there a lot of people from Great Britain?

WEBSTER: Yeah, that's what I mean. That, that working working there in that shipyard where almost all the supervisors were British. And they had this clique there and they went to the opera and everything. You know, that must have been a great life.

LEVINE: That was a great life.

WEBSTER: Great life.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And, and it was during the war yet, you know, on top of that. But then when she came back to England, it was depression and it was tough. And then we moved to America, and it was tough here.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: We had the whole Depression ahead of us there when she got here.

LEVINE: And how—

WEBSTER: And she, she just never was happy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. How did the Depression affect your family, here?

WEBSTER: Well—

LEVINE: Did your father get laid off?

WEBSTER: Oh, he was off half the time.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: More than half the time. I mean, things were tough. I can remember when I was, what, in sixth, seventh, sixth grade, fifth and sixth grade. Used to go to the grocery store and put on things on the tick, you know? And God, if it wouldn't have been for that grocer, half the people in that neighborhood would have starved to death. [not understood] it was tough.

LEVINE: And then do you remember, like the build up and World War II in this country?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Did, did any of your—

WEBSTER: Well, my, my uh older brother never went in the service. My second brother was in the Coast Guard.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: He was Chief Machinist Mate. And I was in the Army for three and a half years.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: So, we knew about the war (laughs).

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, so did your, did you see any um, actual combat?

WEBSTER: No, I was never in combat.

LEVINE: And how about your Coast Guard Brother?

WEBSTER: Uh, he was, he was in the Pacific the whole time, on an LST. They never really saw any combat either, they were hauling ammunition and things like that. But, uh, he was fortunate I guess to get back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: 'Cause they were traveling in the Pacific all alone in an LST.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And I was, I was stationed in Maryland for quite a few years, and then, uh, I went over in the Pacific too. It was all—

LEVINE: It was over then?

WEBSTER: No, I was over there in uh, '44. I was over there in '44, late '44 and '45. I was in the Philippines and then I was in New Guinea first and then the Philippines and then I was in Japan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: For a short while.

LEVINE: Okay, we're gonna, okay we'll resume in here and we were talking about the German family that moved in next door who, that nobody knew how to speak English.

WEBSTER: Well it was pretty tough, uh, for the parents, you know, to communicate. But the kids, we—we got along all right. It—it—it wasn't long before they could speak [not understood] English and get along, you know, they're too kids.

LEVINE: Now how old were the kids?

WEBSTER: Well Frank was uh, he was probably about my age. Within a year or two, and the girl was a little younger, I, she was just an infant.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: And then later on in years, uh, uh, we lost track of 'em. But then later on in years, um, uh Frank, uh, I don't know it occurred but we got together again; we used to go roller skating together, uh, with a, with a group. And he, he was, joined us.

LEVINE: Can you say anything about like, how the other kids and how you treated these, these kids that at first didn't know how to speak the language. I mean did you like, teach them or just--?

WEBSTER: [interposed] Well, well, no they, they just seemed to assimilate in it. It was no brawl, no trouble or, or anything. You know, we just, I don't know how it happens.

LEVINE: You just played—

WEBSTER: With kids they just learn, pick up the language, you know, and uh, we had uh, well we had Italian kids and Polish kids and a lot of Ukrainian kids, that uh were in grade school together, you know, and as soon as they went home they were talking their own language at home. They never spoke English at home because they, they couldn't uh make themselves understood.

LEVINE: Mmhmm. And were the teachers—

WEBSTER: 'Cause a lot of those older people, they, they wouldn't attempt to learn English.

LEVINE: Right. And they could get along, right, because there were other people from their country?

WEBSTER: Yeah, yeah, the whole neighborhood was full of them, so they got along with each other, but uh, they never bothered to learn English a lot of them.

LEVINE: And how about in school? Were the teachers particularly helpful to those kids that couldn't speak English? Do you remember that at all?

WEBSTER: No, I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Mmhmm.

WEBSTER: 'Cause uh, I guess in the, in the earlier grades they probably were but I don't, I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Yeah, so how, how about you? You stayed in school and did you work at all before you left school?

WEBSTER: No, no I didn't, well I worked with my dad, he was a man had, had started business for himself.

LEVINE: Oh

WEBSTER: So I worked for him, with him, during high school I'd go out on jobs with him. But uh—

LEVINE: And then, did you finish high school?

WEBSTER: I finished high school.

LEVINE: And then what?

WEBSTER: Uh, then I got a job at a bank, as a bookkeeper and worked there for, I guess about uh two years or three years. And uh, decided I better leave because you couldn't get anywhere there. And uh, then I got a job with a uh brick manufacturer and that's where I stayed for forty years.

LEVINE: And were you, were you doing bookkeeping?

WEBSTER: [interposed] I was a accountant, I was comptroller for thirty, thirty seven years I guess.

LEVINE: And was that in Reading?

WEBSTER: Yeah, that was a headquarters there. Fairly large manufacturing company.

LEVINE: And did the rest of the family stay, you mentioned your brother went to Allentown.

WEBSTER: The oldest brother went to Allentown.

LEVINE: And the rest of the family?

WEBSTER: And the other family stayed in Reading, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah. Did you have the feeling that your mother and father wanted you to become Americanized or did they want you to kind of hold on to your—

WEBSTER: No, no they never held, held uh to the the “Old Country” business, you know. No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Let’s see, how about the effect of coming here? I mean you were so young but, do you think that made a difference in you, in your personality, in, do you think that had an effect the fact that you came from somewhere else and came to this country?

WEBSTER: Yeah, I don’t think so, I was too young. I think at that age you really don’t remember anything about it and you’re in a different environment.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: And I, I think you just pick up the—

LEVINE: Did your mother and father keep company with people who were from Scotland?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

LEVINE: In what ways, did they—

WEBSTER: [interposed] They had a clique of, of Scottish and English people they used to go to, I remember going to houses you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh

WEBSTER: With uh, where they were English they were mostly English people. They had parties and whatnot when I was really young.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did they have anything like a lodge, or a--

WEBSTER: [interposed] But uh, no, no they didn't in Reading, no.

VOICE 1: You would ask a question.

VOICE 2: I was free to go.

LEVINE: Oh, you want to start? Okay. Well, we're gonna pause. [Pause] Okay, so we were talking about their socializing.

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: But even that way, your idea is that they really had much more of a good time when they were in Spain.

WEBSTER: Uh, well my mother, yeah, I think, I'm, I'm sure that was her problem, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: That, that, you know, the life was so much different after that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah. And did, how long did you stay in Reading then? Until you retired?

WEBSTER: Yeah, 'til nine, we moved here in '81.

LEVINE: In '81.

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you've really been down here twenty-five years.

WEBSTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-uh, uh-huh. Let's see, what do you feel proud of? What makes you feel satisfied that you've done in your life?

WEBSTER: Gosh, that's a good question.

LEVINE: (laughs)

WEBSTER: Well, we've had a good life. Can't, can't complain about that. And I had a, I had a, an excellent job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And things worked out pretty well, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: I, I really didn't do anything outstanding in my life. But uh—

LEVINE: You would've been, do you think you would have had as good a life had you stayed—

WEBSTER: in England. Gosh I don't, pos-, how can you tell, yeah.

LEVINE: [interposed] Yeah, how can you say, yeah. Well, why don't you say how you met your wife?

WEBSTER: How did I meet you, in night school.

CONNIE: In night school

WEBSTER: We graduated in 1938, and uh, in the fall of '38, well we graduated in June and in the fall, uh, I went to night school to study uh, to pick up a class on social security. That's what it was. Social security started then.

LEVINE: [interposing] Oh for your job?

WEBSTER: Yeah well I wanted to know about it. You know I wanted to get some information on it. And uh, that started in '37. And, what did you go to school for, Connie?

CONNIE: I don't know. (all laugh) [not understood] business courses, uh, now I really don't remember.

WEBSTER: I think, yeah, I think that's what it was. I think you wanted to study shorthand, more shorthand or something. And uh, we met at night school. We hadn't known each other in school, we graduated in the same class. But there were seven hundred and fifty six in the class so we never met in, in high school and we met in night, night school and I guess we went together, what, for four years, yeah and then uh, I uh, why did I, oh I know, I, I uh, got laid-off, there was a little tough session there in building [not understood]. They laid off some of the office staff and I got laid off.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

WEBSTER: And uh, I went into the Draft Ward and volunteered. I think I had gone down to uh, uh, Norfolk, Virginia. My brother was working there as a plumber. As a, in a shipyard there. And I went down there and tried to oh, get in the Navy. And I couldn't get in because my eyes were bad, so I volunteered in, through Selective Service. And I went in the Army and we, we got married uh, while I was on leave before I went in.

LEVINE: Oh.

WEBSTER: In '42.

LEVINE: What was your motivation? Was it because you got laid off and you didn't know what to do?

WEBSTER: [interposed] Yeah, there was no , there was never no, there was no jobs available at the time. And uh, I just decided, I might as well, I was gonna get called up sooner or later anyhow probably.

LEVINE: Mhmm. Why don't you mention your wife's name and maiden name?

WEBSTER: Uh, Constance Webster is my wife's name. H. Webster (laughs), for high.

CONNIE: H-I-G-H

WEBSTER: H-I-G-H.

LEVINE: It was maiden name?

WEBSTER: [interposed] Is her maiden name, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, oh, uh-huh. Okay, and did you have children?

WEBSTER: We have one daughter, Kim, who lives in Reading, Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and grandchildren?

WEBSTER: No grandchildren.

LEVINE: None?

WEBSTER: No, they, she's, well she's fifty what, fifty, fifty three now. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: She's a musician, she's an oboist.

LEVINE: Oh. How about music in your life growing up? Was that part of what the family did or not?

WEBSTER: Uh, well now, let's see. Nobody in the fam, we have (coughs) Bruce used to play drums and uh back in the, that would've been back in thirties, and uh, we used to have uh, his band used to practice at the house and drive

everybody crazy. But there were, no one else in the family, well my, yeah my sister played piano. And uh, that's about it, though, yeah.

LEVINE: Mmhmm. How about religion? Were you a religious family?

WEBSTER: No, no we weren't. Uh, my parents never, never were religious. I don't know if they ever were when they were younger or not, they never were when, a, a time I remember.

LEVINE: So you never really went to church or anything?

WEBSTER: I didn't go to church much at all 'til I married, 'til I started to go with Connie.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONNIE And then that happened because we were going to adopt a child.

WEBSTER: Yeah, we were gonna adopt a child and I had to join church. Because it was a, a Lutheran group and we had two foster children for a little while. Uh, and then she became pregnant and we had a daughter.

LEVINE: Mm. Mmhmm. Okay, let's see. How about the American Dream? Was that something that your mother or father ever—

WEBSTER: The American Dream.

LEVINE: thought about or wanted, or got?

WEBSTER: Well, I think my dad always thought that this was a great country. You know, at the, he was always glad he came here. He always imparted that.

LEVINE: Did they, were they, politically aware? I mean, were there any political events that kind of touched the family?

WEBSTER: [interposed] Oh, my dad was a staunch Democrat. (laughs). Well, he was a trade unionist from, I guess his childhood and uh, he, he was a staunch Democrat all his life.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about—

WEBSTER: And he was also a staunch Socialist.

LEVINE: Oh!

WEBSTER: In, locally.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: 'Cause we had a Socialist government in Reading for quite oh, quite a few years (coughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WEBSTER: And he was a staunch Socialist too.

LEVINE: Wow. How about trade union activities? Was there anything that you remember about your father being involved in that had to do with unions?

WEBSTER: Oh yeah, he was always involved in the union. In the Plumber's Union. In the building trade's unions, yeah.

LEVINE: [interposed] In anything that you—uh-huh, yeah.

WEBSTER: And he used to uh, be active all the time. He was president of the union for a local [not understood] many years, and he and the business agent used to go out on jobs, I used to go, when I was a little kid I used to ride along with them. Quite often, to various jobs, you know, and sit in the car and wait for him. You know, negotiating strikes and whatnot.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Do you remember any un-any events? Like strikes or anything else that was—

WEBSTER: Oh I can remember them being out on strike but I don't really remember uh any actual events, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about the Socialist, uh, politics? Was there anything that—

WEBSTER: Well that was strictly local. You know, it was strictly a local thing. There wasn't anything, uh, strident about it or anything like that. It was strictly a local thing.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about growing up, were there any heroes, was there anybody that, either that you knew or that, was a public figure that you like, really thought was terrific? That you wanted to emulate in any way?

WEBSTER: Gee I can't, I can't remember any.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: That you know, no I can't, I can't remember any that would've driven to me do thi-anything, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, well I would imagine FDR was a big figure in your--

WEBSTER: [interposed] Yeah, yeah, he was a big figure—

LEVINE: Yeah.

WEBSTER: Yeah, because that, that you see that was '32 he was elected, and he was, he was a favorite, and then uh, that went on so long—

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, well, gee, is there anything else you can think of, maybe I haven't thought to ask, relative to you or your family coming here, starting another life, and living out your lives here?

WEBSTER: Gee, I can't think of anything else. No, I really can't think of anything else that uh, would be interesting.

LEVINE: (Laughs) Well it's all interesting. So, okay, well maybe this a place to close and thank you very much.

WEBSTER: [interposed] Okay. You're quite welcome.

LEVINE: And I've been speaking with Archie Webster who came at three years old from England when, in 1924. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.