

(random chatter)

**Judy Moran:** Hi, my name is Judy Moran. I'm a board member for Walkway Over the Hudson. I'm a retired elementary teacher, and the reason why I'm on the board of directors for Walkway Over the Hudson is that my father worked for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford railroad and we, I was, I'm from Connecticut, we moved all around Connecticut, and he came to Poughkeepsie and I lived out in the Town of Poughquag, so that he could work on the Poughkeepsie end of the Railroad Bridge. So I do have a connection with the railroad bridge and was quite adamant that we make it into the walkway and bike path that are, have proposed for a number of years and are definitely working on and the outlook looks great thanks to the Dyson Foundation and there will hopefully be some money from the state budget should it, when it gets passed this year.

**Interviewer:** So how long have you lived in the Hudson Valley?

**Judy Moran:** Oh for a long time, longer than I'd like to admit, which is probably 50 sum years or so. We moved here when I was a teenager and I went to high school here, and I was out of the area for college, but came back because I had met my husband, and you know how that goes. So we lived in the Dutchess county area.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any stories about like your dad working on the bridge or anything like that?

**Judy Moran:** Yes I do, as I was, I was fortunate enough to be in, to go visit that little signal station. It was at the corner of Washington Street and Parker Avenue in Poughkeepsie. The Walkway Over the Hudson does have a picture of it. It was just a little, little boxy station, but what I remember specifically was walking up the steps, we only had one car at that point. Parents weren't really that wealthy and so my mother would sacrifice and walk my father to work and then pick me up after whatever game, basketball game or whatever I wanted to attend after high school, and then she would pick me up and then we would go wait for my father and pick him up at that little station. So I got to go in the station a number of times, there are two things that I remember about the station, and one is that there was this board, which was quite long, I don't know if you need to get my hands or not but, it had lights, and this was before the computer age even, this is probably back in...well...the late 50's or early 60's, and so there were little lights and the train, I'm not sure if it was from New Haven or Hartford, but where the train started, the light would light up and you could see the progress of the train, it must have tripped some kind of little sensor in the track and it would light up from here across over to Maybrook where there was a turntable over there for engines and that's where they would, the tracks split and so on and trains would go to whatever destination they had, but this board, and you could tell when the train was coming, also there were great big hand switches, my father was not a big guy, but he would have to put his foot up on the switch and pull the switch so that from whatever track the train was coming in on there was only one track over the bridge, and the trains would have to slow down to I think it was either 15 or 20 miles per hour, so that they wouldn't barrel over the bridge,

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Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Judy Moran

and he had to make sure they were at the right, or approximately the right speed and so he would know when the trains were coming, and they were pretty long, if you've ever seen freight trains now, they go on the west side of the Hudson River, you'll know how long the trains were, they were just about as long, but there weren't as many, they weren't containerized at that point. There's one more thing that I remember, and that is that there was a big bamboo hoop, probably two and a half feet across or so, and this is before cell phones you know, and there would, if there was a message for the engineer in the train, they'd clip on a piece of paper on this big bamboo hoop which had a long handle, and I would get to stand out there, hold up this bamboo hoop by the handle, and the engineer would come along and scoop his arm into the hoop, take off the message, and throw the bamboo hoop down on the ground a little ways further down the track. So after the train had gone I could go run and get the bamboo hoop, and he let me go out on the bridge one time when there were no trains coming and he said, which was my first clue, yeah sure go ahead, and I wondered why he let me go out there so easily, so readily. So I go walking and, for the first, I'm not sure, quarter mile or so, its over houses and so on which wasn't so bad, but at that point there's a space between the ties, and the space is, I don't know three or four inches or so, and you can see right down through, so I got out over the water, or started to go over the water and I turned around and came back, and he said, "oh you're back so soon." So anyway, so that's kind of cute little things that I remember, being able to be in that little signal station with him.

**Interviewer:** Do you know of any like local businesses or anything that were affected by like the traffic over the bridge or anything like that?

**Judy Moran:** Not that I know of, but many people were impacted over the fire. On May the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1974, there was a fire on the railroad bridge and the department of transportation made whoever owned the railroad bridge at that time, I don't think it was CSX, I think it was Conrail, which was a consolidated effort to take over all the railroad companies at that time, because my father retired probably in the late 60's or so, and after the fire the D.O.T made Conrail take down all of these pieces from off the bridge including the rails because pieces were falling on people's property and into the river and so on, and so it caused a problem and that's why the bridge, from about 3/4s, starting from the Highland side, about 3/4s across its bare on the Poughkeepsie side.

**Interviewer:** So what do you, what would you say your role has been with Walkway Over the Hudson?

**Judy Moran:** I started out about 10 years or so ago, there was a man named Bill Sepe who had the idea and started the organization and we really do appreciate the fact that he, as I said, had the idea and started the organization, and I was a board member for a while at that time and I was a tour guide on the bridge, we had tours back then, there are private tours now but you need to sign up and have an escorted tour, its not open to the public yet.

**Interviewer:** It's safe to tour on?

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Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Judy Moran

**Judy Moran:** You can walk on it, out from the Highland west side, you can walk out about a quarter of the way across the bridge, there's grating, metal grating, that you can see through, anyway, so you asked, tell me, rephrase that question again.

**Interviewer:** Just what your role was with Walkway Over the Hudson?

**Judy Moran:** Yes, so I was a tour guide on the, on the bridge and I was very interested, as I said because I have this family connection, that we make a use out of the bridge, restore the bridge because its historic. It's on the national register of historic places. It was built in 1888 as you probably know, and what amazes me is that it's all hand riveted, there were people, we have pictures at the Walkway office of some of the workers that were up on the bridge which are really very interesting.

**Interviewer:** Did you have to go through training to be a tour guide?

**Judy Moran:** I had to know a little history and some statistics about the bridge but that wasn't too hard to do so, so.

**Interviewer:** So what got you involved in Walkway?

**Judy Moran:** It was my father's connection with, as I say the family connection, or the family association with the bridge, the fact that he worked there and that we should do something definitely to preserve the bridge and find a use for it.

**Interviewer:** And what has been your vision of the bridge?

**Judy Moran:** To have a walkway, the idea now is, well the original idea I think was to put planks on it, wooden planks but in the...monetary for monetary reasons and to make it so we could pave the walkway quicker. They're now talking about concrete sections, I won't call them concrete slabs but, so that they can be precast elsewhere and just bring, truck them in probably, and bring them in, lay them down to make a concrete, I'm not sure, I'm not an engineer. I'm not sure how thick they would be but at least it would be good for biking and hiking, someone wanted to know should be allow horses on the bridge, and I said I don't think so, the idea is who's going to clean up after the horse?

**Interviewer:** So how do you envision walkway working with New York State parks?

**Judy Moran:** We're hoping that once we get the bridge completed that the state parks and recreation department will take over the, and make a linear park, make it into a linear park and so, because they're used to handling parks and so on, there's been talk about having our Walkway organization turn into a group called Friends of the Walkway or something of that nature, and there's also an idea, I'm hoping it will work out, that possibly the New York State Bridge Authority would work with the New York State Parks and Recreation department, so that the Bridge Authority could help, or do the maintaining of the bridge, since they are used to doing bridges, and you know there's

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Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Judy Moran

superstructure, understructure, there's the piers in the river and it's, it's, I realize that it's quite a job to do maintenance and so on as well.

**Interviewer:** So do you have any suggestions as a name for the state park?

**Judy Moran:** Well, not really. I haven't thought about that a lot. I thought about that a little, the Dyson Foundation has been really good in getting us some funding and getting us some connections with New York State, so maybe it should be the Dyson Bridge but, there's the Dyson Cancer Center at Vassar Hospital so, I'm not sure, maybe we could just stick with the Poughkeepsie-Highland Bridge Park. We need to give credit to both sides of the river because actually half belongs to Dutchess County and half belongs to Ulster County on the other side of the river just like any of the other bridges, you can see a little marker in the middle, you are now entering Dutchess County and so on.

**Interviewer:** What role do you feel the bridge has played for the community or the region?

**Judy Moran:** The Bridge will be quite a tourist spot. People will come and the tourism bureau is very interested in having that happen, we're hoping to get something done for the Quadra-centennial for Henry Hudson's coming up the Hudson River, in 2009 which is a pretty short length of time as far as all of this construction is concerned, it will bring tourism, it will, hotels and restaurants will benefit on both sides of the river, as well as bed and breakfasts and so on there are a number of tourist spots around the area, Vanderbilt, Roosevelt, and a number of other sites even south of here.

**Interviewer:** Has your vision for the bridge changed at all since the governor announced it would be a state park, like was it different before?

**Judy Moran:** Not really. We've had the same vision for a long time, minor, minor amenities, if I can use that word, have changed, such as the railing, the lighting, what kind of lights do you want, should we or should we not have trash receptacles, should it be a carry in and carry out park, it you know, but those are minor things, and also someday we would definitely like to have a museum of some kind, Walkway Over the Hudson has a number of, well I'm calling them memorabilia, but objects, we have the original blueprints for the bridge, the original blueprints from 1888 which is quite amazing. Some of them are framed, and there will be railroad spikes and there will, and someone has said that we should take a railroad tie and make pieces of it and people could use it for bookends, but there are definitely things that we need to preserve we have photos, we have newspaper articles, we have quite a lot of varied and different things, so there's been some suggestion of a visitors center or museum, it could be both tied into one.

**Interviewer:** Where, where would that be, near the...

**Judy Moran:** Well we'd have to find a good spot for construction to build this, it would have to have adequate parking, and you'd have to have facilities including restroom

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Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Judy Moran

facilities, and people want to buy water and candy bars and things like that before going over the bridge, or I should say granola bars, whatever.

**Interviewer:** Would you want to work there?

**Judy Moran:** Yeah I'd be glad to...maybe they're be little vendors or kiosks or pushcarts or something of that kind. We haven't decided all those kind of things yet, let's get the bridge open first.

**Interviewer:** Is there any particular site like this like that you would like to model it after?

**Judy Moran:** There are other bridges, there's one in Rochester, there are several other railroad bridges that have been turned into walkways and or bike paths, none of them is as long or as high as the Poughkeepsie-Highland railroad bridge.

**Interviewer:** So this is a challenge?

**Judy Moran:** It is a... it's a construction challenge. I mean that's the reason we need, we need money, we need lots of money, and we're hoping to get some of that from the state budget. If we don't get all of it this year then we're hoping to have some put in by next year as well.

**Interviewer:** Do you think people will be nervous like because it's so high and so long to go out on it?

**Judy Moran:** Some people are afraid of heights. We've had people that are afraid of heights already; it usually helps if someone takes their arm. It will be a solid top on the bridge so that will make it easier, the view however from up there is wonderful, everyone I'm sure that you've interviewed, has said how great the view is. There's also been talk during construction of whether or not we should put a see-through panel so people can, on purpose, look down and see the superstructure and watch the river and so on, but those are quite expensive, it has to be extra heavy Plexiglas so that I'm not sure that we're going to be able to afford that or not, we'll have to wait and see during construction.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever have anyone scared of heights on one of your tours?

**Judy Moran:** Yes I did, escorting them, letting them hold onto someone is helpful. There have been people who are really afraid to go out, it's 212 feet off the river. It had, the reason its so high is that it had to be level for a train to go over, trains don't go up hills very well, if they do it has to be very gradual there's a certain percentage incline that they cannot exceed so...we've have people that have been afraid, or they go out a little ways and turn around and come back. So you know, whatever people are comfortable doing, but we've had little children out there too. I just said hold onto their hand very tightly, please.

Hudson River Valley Institute  
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Judy Moran

**Interviewer:** So you don't think the height issue would take away from the...

**Judy Moran:** I don't think so, I think that bikers are used to that kind of thing, and if someone really wants to come walk over the bridge they're going to walk over the bridge. The secret by the way is just to look straight ahead and don't look down.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any like one point that you feel is like most interesting like an event that happened or a person or anything?

**Judy Moran:** Well we'd love to get the governor out on the bridge. We've had some state senators, we've had a number of diplomats and so on, legislators and political people come out on the bridge and it's great to have them. We definitely appreciate their support. I'm not sure that there's any one person more than another that we would like to get out there, we would, as I say, we would love to have the governor, and we'd love to get our senator Hillary Clinton out on the bridge. She's too busy campaigning I think.

**Interviewer:** Did the mayor go out on the bridge?

**Judy Moran:** Mayor John Tkazyik, the new mayor for just a couple of months or 3 months now, has been on the bridge and is very supportive, the Poughkeepsie mayor yes.

**Interviewer:** I think that's it.

**Judy Moran:** Well thank you very much for your time, and I really wanted to be recorded because I'm, well I guess the word is quite proud that my father worked there and I was able to tell the story eventually of, it was a little space it wasn't that, all that big a building, and he pulled the switches and watched for the trains and you know, way back when so I'm glad to be associated with the bridge.