

Hudson River Valley Institute  
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Bernie Riley

**Interviewer (Kimberly Maschak):** The first question is where did you grow up?

**Bernie Riley:** I grew up here in LaGrange, my father was on a dairy, ran a dairy farm it was a family farm when I was born.

**Interviewer:** Where did you go to school, in that elementary, high school, college?

**Riley:** Walking school for the first four years in LaGrange, walking version, one room, and then we joined my dad was the last trustee of the district I was in, we lived in at the time, and they closed it down, that's a long story, and we ended up in the Arlington district and that's where I finished my high school.

**Interviewer:** Now what did you parents do for a living, industry? Business? Anything?

**Riley:** My father, as I said, he was on, he ran a dairy farm which my grandfather had started out in LaGrange, when I was born and when that shut down as he put it, he said he sold the cows in '45 and the rest of the stuff in '46, ended the barn, and he went into full time construction, residential mostly, residential and big buildings, crop storage, dairy barns, my father loved to build, the bigger the better in that regard.

**Interviewer:** Was that solely in LaGrange or all of Poughkeepsie or the Hudson Valley?

**Riley:** Basically east of Poughkeepsie, we didn't come into the city, he didn't at least, but in the rural towns, LaGrange primarily, Union Vale, Beekman in that area.

**Interviewer:** How long did he do that for?

**Riley:** The rest of his working life, he must have been when we left the farm in '46 dad was in his early 30's so he did that right up until probably about 70 was when he started to shut down on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday or thereabouts.

**Interviewer:** What about your mother?

**Riley:** My mother, that's a little bit of a problem, I don't know every detail about her days but she was, she got into the nursing profession at the state hospital in long island, that's where she came from, and my grandfather, that'd be her father, used to live, regionally, as far as we know, well we know that, out around Waverly and Binghamton area, but in the 30's when things started to squeeze no money, he ended up in New York city, he's one of those that, to quote it "worked on the empire state building", but mother, mother grew out, was born and raised on long island, and she went into the state hospital and she came out of it with what I believe they call an LPN, licensed practical nurse, and then they, her and my dad for whatever reasons, ended up at Wingdale, my father was basically working his way back home, I know that, my grandfather had taken quite ill, and he could not function, basically at anything that took physical labor so my father was the youngest of the boys and grandmother talked him into coming back to the farm, it's a

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humorous story if you know much about how families got along in the old days, I say humorous, of course there's probably people who disagree because in some of the literature, I guess I've collected that were, that dad kept in his safe, he had a safe of sorts in the house, there are papers which I've opened and read, they're written by hand, the contracts between my grandfather and father, they were a riot, I mean but you know, I'm in charge of this and this and that and you've got to stay away from me, oye oye oye, my grandfather must have chocked when he saw that one, but at the same time he didn't have a lot of choice, he wasn't up to it and father ran the farm until his siblings decided that. Well they couldn't agree on anything, he was one of twelve by the way, and old Irish family, that's the thing, there were a lot of them around that had families like that, and so he decided when they wouldn't agree he was leaving, so of course obviously that took us to where we are now, when my memory really started to crank, we moved, we moved about a mile, mile and a half away from where we lived, and I still own the place.

**Interviewer:** How about you, what was your first job?

**Riley:** My first job, I guess you could say my chores, chopping wood, yeah I can remember the wood pile out there, a big heap, you'd buzz saw it, we did have a buzz saw, and they'd bring wood in from the forest, the trees, out in there, saw them up, and my job that I can remember was to make sure that wood got split in two, well we'd saw it into lanks, but split in to pieces about what, three four inches in diameter, something you could put in a wood stove, a big old, I believe it was a Glenwood, I remember it looked like, and I had to make sure the wood box was full, and of course the wood was split so we could have more for tomorrow morning, breakfast, etc, etc, but when you talk about first job, its, I never thought about it that way, but that was it, aside from making the bed perhaps.

**Interviewer:** What would you consider your profession or career for the rest of your life?

**Riley:** It varied, I worked at farms, on the neighboring farms until I was about 19, by that time I was going to the State University of New York at Delhi, and I came out of there as a civil technology major, heavy construction, concrete and steel, I had to do something that would work in other words, farming was fine but you got to pay the bills, so I went, since then I've been in and around that, I went to work out of school right with the state of Connecticut, engineering section, and I worked my way back home after a few, well I joined the merchant marine, I decided maybe I'd like that, which I did, but when I applied to go further, I didn't want to be painting walls all the time, if you've ever been in the navy or around anything else that's the big thing on, they paint all the time, clean, paint, clean paint, shoot too course if you have to, but I said well, I don't want to be painting all the time and that's the same thing they do on there so I applied, or put out application feelers to Kings Point Maritime Academy in Long Island, and they told me I was too old...at 21, the book says you got to be 21 on your last birthday, and of course obviously they work it out, but they said I was, basically I was too old, so I said well, I guess I'm not going to do that, so I tied back into the company at home with my father and my brother, and basically I've been at that, work, mostly construction, residential,

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drainage work, all kinds of things, I dig a lot, I have digging equipment and stuff, that's what I've been doing ever since, I started in business on my own in '62 and I got some paper in the mail you know, what are they selling now it says "oh you've been in business over 45 years you want to celebrate" no no no, someday maybe I will but you had to pay the bills and that's what I did, but uh, and I, well I probably do that until I can't, that's the way I would say it.

**Interviewer:** Now from what you said already, I assume you've lived in the Hudson Valley all your life?

**Riley:** Well when you say all my life, 99.9%, I spent the better part of a year or so in Florida, I spent some more in a couple of western states, I like to travel, and nothing really tied me down but as far as practical purposes, yes, here.

**Interviewer:** Now whereabouts in the Hudson Valley have you lived?

**Riley:** Well as far as the family homestead, we call it the homestead goes, it's the town of LaGrange, it's been my home for, as far as all purposes go, since I was, actually I was born on the farm, which was, we paid taxes to three towns, LaGrange, Union Vale and Beekman, the barn used to sit in Union Vale, it burned down, so they built a new one in LaGrange, crazy that the way it is, the line was right there, but as I say, I've been here my whole life for all intensive purposes.

**Interviewer:** We're going to focus now more on questions about the Poughkeepsie rail bridge, what role do you feel has played for this community, the region, and more for this general area?

**Riley:** Well, you know surprisingly enough the bridge itself did not play, I've read lots of books too I mean incidentally you probably have as well, or you will, a big part in the growing of Poughkeepsie as a lot of people might think, it came through here and headed for Boston as you probably may know if you've looked at anything, but they well, as the man Mr. Mabee that wrote the book on the bridge himself noted, they built the bridge and had no way to get off it, you're probably aware of one of the stories, or if you aren't I'll make you aware, the contract called for the bridge to be ready, to take its first train, locomotive, at a certain time and it wasn't, so they quick like a flash over on the east end of the bridge, of course train tracks down here, what is it Grand Central, probably where they got it from, and they put a track around and up to it and they ran, they weren't even done building it yet, they ran the locomotive car across and back again, and that they said fulfilled their contract so then they finished the bridge, but as a matter of building Poughkeepsie itself it really didn't do much, 90% of the coal or more that it hauled went to New England, mostly to Boston and places like that but it still obviously crossed the river here and for a reason it was a good place to cross I mean it wasn't you know, low banks and things like that, of course it does make it quite long I believe as I remember its 1,600 and some feet from butment to butment, I was going to say I could ask you if you've ever been out there and looked at it but maybe you have maybe you haven't, its quite a ways over land on the other side before it hits the ground, of course I've been all

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the way across the bridge, I've walked across it a couple times, things like that, and I worked on it, I've been on top of the bridge, I can tell you what it was built like at the time, the rails were still on it when I first saw it, I thought when they shut the thing down in '74, that's the year of the fire, that they tore them all up but they didn't, they only torn them up right where the fire was, you went down Delafield Street here toward the river in Poughkeepsie and you could look up and of course there stood the superstructure, steel, but they had taken the rails and ties off of that, but they left them all the way across the river, sat there forever almost, in great shape, the ties were immaculate you know you looked at that, you could put a train on it right then, of course you'd have to get them off, that'd be a little problem, but still.

**Interviewer:** What role do you feel the bridge will have for the future?

**Riley:** Well that's, I'd like to think it'll be a lot better obviously the State of New York as well as our neighboring states have joined the exercise age I guess you'd say, where trails and things like that, and of course the proposal for the bridge as you probably know is a walk way over the Hudson, it's the nickname kind of like, it was the Poughkeepsie railroad bridge association when I first joined up, but the walkway I think it'll make this place a center of activity for bicyclers of course and walkers, its fantastic to get across the bridge and just walk out onto ground over there its quite the thing, I've done it, it's alright, I think it will be a center, you know it'll just be a major tourist attraction and the view is definitely, it's a long one, I kind of liked it and that's one of the reasons I would have to say why it was not hard for me to decide to join with Bill Sepe when he thought about that, his house where he lived on Gifford Avenue backed right up to the railroad bridge, there it was, you looked out his back door and you know, it's a monster, of course its like anything big, until you get next to it it doesn't look like much, but when you get next to it and you see that you, I kind of think I like the pyramids over in Egypt, looking at them in a book they look big but I have to say getting there is just like getting next to this thing, its well, of course they're determining now that its, engineering wise its quite sound there's three main beams go across the river, I don't know whether you're aware of this, you may be you may not there were only two when they built it, it had two tracks too, one going each way, which kind of made her a little rocky, you know trains being quite heavy but they put the third one in the middle in 1917, right while it was still in use, they'd have to stop when the train would come for a few minutes but the train would go and they'd go back to work, they're six feet high the I beam, they're fabricated I beams, monstrous angle irons across the top with a steel web but, its strong, let me tell you, its strong, and of course one thing about it which we've known for a long time its English steel, most of it, maybe not all, but that's why its so rusty, but its like these fancy guard rails they're putting up on our highways now, the rust wont bother it for a hundred more years, its low carbon, it rusts very slow, I'm up in the woods snowmobiling up north, Indian lake and whatnot, and there's old, of course they logged the whole country, and there are old Model A trucks and everything sitting around, and you can still tell what it is, if that was a modern vehicle, it'd be nothing but a burn mark on the ground, it'd have rusted right down, so they used good material there's no question about it, and of course the Irishmen that finished the job off was one of the best, O'Rourke his name was, he came, he started out down in the city but he ended out in, where was it, Wisconsin, but

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they got him back here to do, he was the third contractor to take on the bridge, but he made it, and we were over there cleaning off the rocks and things alongside everything, you know, the ledge rock and whatnot, you could see all the I bolt anchors that they put in to hold it while they were building it, its its its just a thing to marvel, as far as I'm concerned it is a marvel, that people could build these kind of things, of course obviously its kind of nery to walk out there as Mr. (Dierrier?) said, but they rode a train across it (all the time or long time).

**Interviewer:** Speaking of all of this, whats your most interesting memory or whats the most interesting fact about the bridge that you hold dear, a person, a place, an event, anything?

**Riley:** You know what I tried to think of these things on the way into your establishment here, but I'd say probably, to me at the time anyway, the most promising thing when you are on the west end of the bridge, we used to come in through a sub station for central Hudson, they got one over there of course obviously, and down, wind down through to the bridge right where it juttet out from the land, and I met there with probably two dozen people mostly...I don't think there were any women, I think they were all men at that time, there were women in the organization but the men were of course the working people, and several of them were old railroad people, when I say old railroad people, they were definitely older, and tell stories and whatnot, kind of like a, almost a party, there was like a picnic lunch and whatnot, and we worked on the bridge several afternoons in a row I remember that, and that to me was, to be actually working on the thing was...well...I think quite memorable as far as that goes, and the plan at that time was to put a wooden deck on the bridge, and I didn't know if I exactly thought that was a great idea, but you know, it seemed like it might work so I said alright lets go, the first, I don't know they got about a hundred feet done before they ran into a legal problem.

**Interviewer:** Now you said that you've been on the bridge several times, can you speak about one of those experiences, maybe one of your memories.

**Riley:** Mr. Sepe, at that time the Chairman of the bridge group, was laying out what he wanted to do on one of his work programs, we took a Saturday, Saturdays were not uncommon, I said alright I'll work on Saturday, I didn't usually do that but I said I will, and we started walking out on the bridge, he's in front on this metal grating which runs alongside of the tracks that are still there, and you look down through, I decided not to look down through because I'm a little skittish about heights now, didn't used to be, but I am anymore, and he stopped along the way and he pointed things out and he says to me "Bernie, you and Jim here, there was several people, these trees are growing up through" right from the ground, you can see them, "You cut them back and then the hand rail is leaning", they get to do that with old age, the anchors being loosened somehow, somebody did it, "And straighten them up" and things like that "And I'm going to take the rest of the fellows out farther and we're going to work out there" and I thought about that and I started to casually move out toward the edge where the trees stuck up through the ties, the ties are about nine inches apart and I'm thinking about it and I says well I guess if I don't think about how high up I am I'll be alright, and I got better, that

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afternoon I'd climb around more and everything else but it took me a little...few minutes to get used to that, and when they came back everybody seemed to be quite pleased with what we'd done so I was happy, and as I say, that got me better and of course we worked out farther and I stood out over the water setting up hand rails and different things right on the edge of those ties where you make a slip, you're not likely to feel too good when you land, but at that time you know the old railroad, the old railroad men that were with us, they were all over the place they'd crawl underneath and up on top, I wasn't up to that yet.

**Interviewer:** Can you recall any local businesses or any local industry that was affected or generated by the bridge or traffic?

**Riley:** Can I recall, well...not too well, I can think perhaps of different things that took place, but I don't really...I'm not a good person to talk to get information about any of those affected...I knew people that lived in the area that told me when the trains came through you knew it, and your house made everything shake on the tables and stuff but as far as businesses go, only from what I've heard and that would be second hand but I, you know I was interested in hearing stories such as when Mr. Mabee wrote the book, what did he call that book, isn't that something, I read it, I've got it home.

**Interviewer:** *Bridging the Hudson.*

**Riley:** Bridging the Hudson, that's it, he told several stories about different things, of course he researched it much more than I would have been inclined to do, I was interested in the walking aspect, I mean the bridge, I was quite satisfied that it was probably done as a railroad bridge, not that when I looked it over I thought it should be, it could have carried light rail passengers without any trouble at all, but in any case I went along with the move to make it a walking bridge.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever heard of any ideas during your time either with walkway over the Hudson or ever about ideas to recycle the bridge, scrap the bridge, or even remove the bridge or destroy the bridge?

**Riley:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** Can you speak about those at all?

**Riley:** Well the rumor was always running around, I say rumor because it was very hard to figure out who started it, but we got to get rid of that thing, it's an eye sore, I detest the word eye sore, of course I've heard it many times in other places, and I think it's a fantastic piece of work, its kind of like, a heck of a thing to say but, taking your girlfriend who may never have been to a ball game, in New York for instance, she'll either sit there glowering at it, been there, or she'll ask you five hundred questions so you don't get to see the game, not that that's a bad thing I mean there'll be more, but what's this what's that why did that guy run over there and touch him, and how come he slid into him and knocked him down and things like that, so but as I say that gives into rumor but so many

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of them talk about using these terminologies which of course raise my hackles I guess you could say, I didn't want to see the bridge knocked down I'll tell you that right from when I was probably...well, five or six years old, when I first basically saw it, and my father remembers when the Mid-Hudson Bridge was opened, I believe he said it was 1932, and of course if you look just north there was the railroad bridge, trains were on it, at that time, we used to talk many times about moving goods, its still published that a freight train can move, I think I believe its four hundred tons on one gallon of fuel for approximately a mile, there isn't anything else in this world, before or since, that could do that, I mean and you look at our, of course we're in the northeast, the place is crawling with what we call railroad beds, I mean obviously tons of money, man hours actually, not so much money, because at that time, like when I was first working on the farm, if you got ten dollars a day I was doing great, ten dollars a day not an hour, now I don't even, that's disappeared of course, but man power its no safer, the Chinese came into the west coast, the Union Pacific out into Utah was 99% personnel Chinese, work, I mean those people just work work work work work, I don't know whether they ever paid them, but they definitely knew how to work, and you know, but they, northern, well the Harrimans, the Stanford whites, the various railroad moguls, Astor and them, they want to work, I mean I've heard the terminology, referred to myself a couple of times, that for what I was being paid I should sweat bullets, and this is well within my easy memory, I used to look around and think, you must be out of your mind, of course as my father had a famous, he liked to make it into a saying, they pay me for what I know, not what I do anymore, and the last 25-30 years of his working life I heard that a lot, but his experience this is something which, even whether we're running this operation right here or something else, there's no replacing experience, I'll agree to that hands down, I'm going to work for people now, I just looked at their job yesterday, the first time, even though I've been to their house many times, he says we want you to do it, you do? We haven't even discussed how much yet, but I'm glad to do it of course in this case, but at the same time, the bridge itself, again, to me its going to be a centerpiece, as I've already, you've asked me and I've commented on, and I think now, incidentally, its no secret that the governor is, he's got some people jumping up and down of course, bad, is going to sink money into the bridge, I mean eight million dollars I believe I heard, possibly doubling that eventually, but now we get into quality of life, we can all work, put our nose to the grindstone until there ain't no nose left and various vices but this will definitely, again, going back to that bring us a quality of life which we, we could use and things like that, but still, anyway I don't know if I've answered your question but I've gone around it enough.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else about the bridge that you'd like to speak about, any memories, anything about the bridge?

**Riley:** Well, yeah...I suppose there is...memories, memories are not going to be great because the only ones I really have are my personal memories when I worked on it, I mean I have seen trains cross the bridge, never paid much attention to them but they're there, I matter of fact, one of my friends who has passed away the past few years, one of the older people I knew quite well was in the military, and as I recall, he told me he went across that bridge in a troop train heading for San Francisco, that's a long ways away, and he said they don't tell you where your going you just get in that train, and it rolls through

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the night, he said there's only so many ways to get across the Hudson river with a train, its either down to New York, here, or Albany, so he said I'm pretty sure he knew a few of the guys that ran the train and things like that, he said we went across that one, but lets face it, that's another thing which of course as a memory I did not know, now that it comes to mind, I'm working on the bridge, around it and whatnot, what the devil is this, I mean I can see it, its in the weeds, going over vines and bushes, during the second world war, the bridge was considered, what would you call it...a must have for military purposes, they put a fence all the way around it, and dogs and men inside of it, soldiers of course, to make sure nobody else monkeyed with the bridge, and I thought that was, I mean the fence is kind of rickety in some spots now but the cyclone wire, it was good stuff, its still there, and I thought to myself at the time when I looked at it I says is that so, I didn't know that, I said they fenced the whole thing? Oh yeah, you know if somebody blew a hole in the middle of the bridge its as bas as, well we know that how it works, bomb the bridge and you're going to raise hell with whatever went across it, so they did do that, both sides, the east and the west, from butment to butment they did that, I can, that was something which I learned at that time I didn't know, but obviously that's ten years or more ago, maybe even more, but still, and then they, of course it always, I used to love to followed railroad beds where they were visible, obviously where they're not that's something else, but I was of course born just before the breakout of the second world war, so it was kind of easy to follow them at that time because out here in the country construction was virtually nothing, so you could walk for days, I used to walk all over the place following the railroad tracks, the beds as I say, you used to have a little bit of a problem getting across some of the bigger streams because they took the trestle with them, being metal they took anything that was metal with them, but we used to put old logs, we did various things, we were kind of, well I wont say ingenious, but we kind of were, we could get across some how, and the train station, let's see you're sitting here, the bridge is down there, the train station was up here along parker avenue, it was kind of a big thing, I mean I never remember it but the books and things I used to read, studiously study the literature and stuff on to them and the train stations, when the train came over, it stopped and this that and the other thing but I know, I know for instance, as I said earlier in our interview here, that they built the bridge, they got the train across the bridge, that made their contract legal, that they could get paid and all the rest, but they had no connection, the plan was to go to Boston, they had no connection to Boston, there was probably, maybe, I'd say roughly a hundred miles and no train tracks to hook to, so they're out running like mad, the supporters of the bridge, trying to get real estate, and of course, Mr. Mabee's book, as I recall, I think...seems to me he bit into that pretty good, they had visitors, not necessarily welcomed ones, but they were chopping away, trying to go through this one piece of farm land, somewhere out here around a place called Boston corners, which wouldn't mean a hill of beans to me but I know its out there, to get their tracks so they could tie them to the other set on the other side, I think Central New England or one of those, and all of the sudden...I don't know who brought it to their attention but apparently legal people, that you people don't own this 300 and some feet I believe it was, of land, get out! And when somebody else went back to just see what happened, or what didn't happen, there were a few tools laying around, and stamped right onto them, big as life, New Haven Railroad, New Haven did not want this bridge, at all, even though they ended up owning it, because their run was from New Haven, of course



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Boston, New Haven, and down to New York and onto Pennsylvania, wherever, and anything that took business away from them, I guess its logical to say, they wouldn't want it, and its pretty obvious they tore up everything the boys did up there, they eventually got their piece of stuff, but by that time...we were heading toward the second world war and a whole bunch of things were changing around here, I just learned, I say I just learned, I've know it now for a dozen years, that the original Pennsylvania Turnpike through the mountains when you leave the Jersey Pike and swing onto it, I used to think it was kind of interesting the way it was built were tunnels built by the Pennsylvania Railroad for a railroad track, but when the war was over the plan was airplanes were going to do everything, don't need those trains, so the railroad decided...and the state of Pennsylvania said how about that and they bought the tunnels, but they built, they built another set since so they have two each way, as most large tunnels would be, but the original, if they want to stick a railroad through the original tunnels, they could do it, its all been graded for them, you're just riding through there and its something to look out at, how deep the fills and things are, but railroads were a major function at one time the roads were mud, they love to tell a story, some of the family does, and I was there at the time I first heard it, my father and his next, well there was two more kids, he was 10, it would have been 11 and 12, it would have been Helen, were talking about when he went to school in Millbrook, New York, from our farm which was down near LaGrange, he'd drive, he had an old model t, my father was gung-ho about getting an education of some kind what he could, and someone in the group, family mostly, were celebrating somebody's birthday, I think it was dad's birthday matter of fact, and they said, oh Helen you must have went to school with bill then when he went to Millbrook, you'd had to know my aunt, she's getting to be what you call a (?) at that time, and went, I wouldn't do that, if we got stuck in the mud he made me push, I almost fell off my seat, I can just, I mean my aunt Helen was a crackerjack in her younger days obviously if you haven't figure that out but she said, if we got stuck, bill would make me push, no no no she wouldn't, when they built the highway, Route 82, what they call the Mid-County Highway out near where I live, then she'd go, they could ride all the way, but that was, I must say that was, but you know it was all tied in, she used to talk about going on the local trains out where we lived, you'd give the conductor a dime and he'd take you a mile, mile and a quarter up the track to where you friends lived, you might walk home, you might ride the train home but as long as the train was going you'd do it, but trains of course, the reason for the bridge being built in the first place was obviously tremendous, I mean its quite an undertaking when you sit here and look out there and I believe the name Platt, it's a big name in Poughkeepsie or was, and ive read several books and seen displays of the Kingston, what is it, the Kingston Railroad Museum, trolley museum, they have the plans for re-strengthening the bridge in 1917 in their possession, they own them, I mean I've seen them rolled out page after page after page, to put that big I beam through the middle of the Poughkeepsie railroad bridge so, but trains are, I just like trains I'm a railroad buff, there's no way to get around that, as much as I can be.

**Interviewer:** We're going to actually take some time now to focus on the specific area of the bridge that we're focusing on for our independent project, I'll be focusing on the fence and the military history of the bridge which you were speaking about a little bit, and Jason's going to be speaking about the walkway over the Hudson and anything that's

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happened since the fire so we're going to take some time now I'm going to ask you some questions as I said about the fence and then Jason, we're going to switch seats and he's going to go ahead and ask you about the.

**Riley:** Some I know and some I don't know but we'll find that out.

**Interviewer:** Yeah that's fine, absolutely, so if you could speak some more about anything you've heard or anything you've come across in your time either with Walkway Over the Hudson or just your time living here about during World War II, during the, if there was, you were talking about dogs and men and fences and things like that I had also heard they painted the bridge black I'm not sure if you ever heard that, but anything you know of in that capacity if you could speak about that.

**Riley:** Well I'll hit the black first, I know it was black I mean I can see that by looking at it, but that it was painted black by the military or for military reasons it would make sense but I can't tell you I know that, I don't, I do know it was black though and it's been a long time since it was painted, I know, working for the government, as I did at one time, that painting bridges...got to be very expensive across the water, in what, the past twenty-five years, possibly even more, but twenty-five it was advertising paint, this I do remember reading about, to paint structures such as that bridge, or any other across the water, they used to make and advertise paints right, I don't know where they made it but it advertised here in Poughkeepsie journals for painting...structures across the water spans where it might fall into the water and things like that, people were becoming conscious obviously of...pollution, I guess that's what we'd call it even though here we do know that the tides come up beyond the bridge, salt water will, well I believe on a couple occasions has even reached the water intake for the city of Poughkeepsie, that's kind of serious business, but as far as the bridge itself goes.

**Interviewer:** Yes you were speaking of guards and dogs and fences and things.

**Riley:** Yes well when I saw the fence, a couple of the railroad people, as I say a couple, I believe Lee Crowl, the name rings a bell, he had white hair and he was a member, he ended up in Florida, I know that, I do not even know if he is still alive, but I got to know him quite well, and he told me much of the war time history of the bridge, and guard dogs and the men for instance, the soldiers that were put in there, and so I thought, oh something I didn't know, interesting I mean because this fence didn't cost five dollars, it goes up and over rocks and down (?), I mean you'd have had a job if you were a woodchuck to get under the thing, I mean it was, it was not planned, of course they didn't want the dogs to get out either obviously but they let them just run loose, and dogs being the nature they are and obviously trained for that purpose, I don't think you were going to have to worry about anyone sneaking up on them, the very nature of the dog, especially if he's got big teeth, as I recall, Lee told me most of them were German police dogs, breed, they definitely can get to be big, and they definitely got big teeth, I've seen it, I've been around a few, dog would stand, I've seen more than one of them his back would be over 3 feet off the ground, if he jumped up he'd put his feet on top of your shoulders, I mean I'm not a midget, but at the same time, he'd look you in the eye, thank god he was

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friendly, but those were the animals, and of course the men were armed, I mean naturally they're not out there with water pistols, so if there was any trouble they were prepared to shoot, that was their orders.

**Interviewer:** Do you know where the men were from, were they from a military unit or the National Guard or.

**Riley:** I can't tell you, you know he just told me soldiers, and I just, huh ok soldiers, I would have to say a military unit but that would be full of hearsay and guess work a little bit, when somebody tells you they were soldiers and that they remember them, I would say that they were probably from a military unit, they were not you know, logic would tell us they were not likely to be from here, where are my friends we'll try something, you know you get some guys like the Russians did in hungry, you bring some troops in from Manchuria, they'll shoot anybody, and that's what they did, they brought whole soldiers, divisions in from Manchuria to fight the Hungarians, no problem, shoot them, and they would, don't know them, don't care them, but still, the military, the military definitely ran the guard duty and as far as it goes, I remember, I say I remember, I remember, well something that came to light there, its only similar but Mr. Sepe had determined in his mind, which I really didn't take issue with, the he was going to remove the steel rails all the way across the bridge, well if you know anything about rails, I think they probably weigh around, a minimum of forty pounds per foot, so two feet is eighty pounds and on and on and on, you got yourself a job obviously without equipment which we didn't have, we were acquiring equipment, Bill was, Bill Sepe, from one person or another or somebody that knew somebody that knew somebody, and we had a small collect over there cables, winches, things like that, the use of some larger tractors and whatnot, his plan was to chop the rail in pieces and drag it onto the land and chop it up some more, he wanted to just get rid of it because he didn't feel the rail was of any value for a walkway, which it probably wasn't, now the ties, he had another plan for the ties, I mean I can tell you a little about the planning because I was in some of that, the ties are approximately 18 to 20 inches tall, they're about approximately 9 inches thick, wide, whatever you want, they're milled, sawn out of...most of those I believe were pine...they were approximately 32 feet long they had a lot of room on both sides so you could walk with room to spare if you wanted to, trains, you know, they used to hop off, I mean a couple of the railroad men told me oh yeah if you thought you had trouble or something out there you'd hop off the train you know it's just, I'm told the speed limit was 15 miles per hour ...I did have it one time in my possession the book for the running rights for the bridge, they got one, the railroad printed it, it tells you everything and anything about the bridge you got to know to run a train across.

**Interviewer:** You still have that?

**Riley:** No, I'm sorry to say, I've got an idea that the railroad bridge people, successors to the board of directors that I was on may have it, I'm not even sure who brought the thing to our attention but they did, that's something I, see I heard bits and pieces and I always meant to follow up, and its like everything else, I still work for a living, they had a place somewhere, possibly Maybrook, that's a guess, but the line went right on down to

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Maybrook, it was one of the largest dispatching centers in the entire northeast, it would be logical that they would had a copy but anyway, they're destroying everything in Maybrook, its tires now, if it ain't got wheels on it, it don't go, rubber tires, but they found buildings that had old railroad records, well their plan was just to get them out of here and trash them and of course so Bill to some degree, and I was involved a little bit, would try to rescue them I guess you might say, for historical purposes, I don't care, even if they had to do with another bridge we still would have liked them but so many people, well, you know what is that stuff, it was in boxes, out the door with them, now its kind of relative but my brother, William, who ran Riley Homes Inc, from when he got out of the service until he retired, and his son took over, he's cleaning, he's moving, he built a house up in Hyde Park overlooking the river, his wife always wanted to look at the river, out the door, anyway, but he's going through old boxes, I remember seeing some of them and he said, oh god I've got records here going back into the 60's oh on this and this and that and whatnot, and he says he's going to trash them all, I thought about it, I took a few odds and ends but I've got so much stuff trashed down at my place right now I cant even move so I let it go, but people kept them things and put them somewhere and they collected dust and bird droppings and whatever not and they never moved them until somebody wanted the building for something else or knock it down and they go in and just bust it up but uh.

**Interviewer:** About the fence you were speaking about, the guard fence, is that still there today?

**Riley:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Where would it be?

**Riley:** Let me put it this way, it was there when I left.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Riley:** Where would it be, it runs parallel to the bridge, it starts at or near the butments where it ties into the land, big stone butment type things the track comes onto, and it proceeds down to the edge of the river, and there are, as I recall, there were a couple of small gates in it for access obviously, to get into the thing, in or out, as the case may be, and the fence was still there when I left the board of directors, our plans were certainly not to knock it down, and in most cases, but not all, it traversed near the property line, the railroad owns a slice of property and the fences were out there and they zig-zagged along, now for instance that's something else, of course I could keep you here all day when I get onto this subject, on that bridge and I believe they're still there, a pair of field glasses would tell me of course if I wanted to use them, central Hudson, I'm trying to think of when, I was right in the middle of that one, put the feeder lines to Poughkeepsie as outriggers, big heavy iron things, on the bridge, you walk out there, you look out there to the south side and here are these big things sticking out I would guess about 12 feet like they would from pole to pole across the river to the connections on this end, they had...great big cables, an inch in a half or better thick, but that was their main power

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source I'm told, I never really got into that too much, for the city of Poughkeepsie which, when it came time for the trans...what would we call it, transfer of the deeds or properties from the railroad, and eventually got to this man named miller in Pennsylvania, they realized, there was a lot of talk, big heavy talk then, about trashing the bridge and selling it off for scrap iron, obviously its quite heavy I remember reading something where the tonnage of weight, but I don't, I cant remember that now, so they had to look to see what they were going to do with their wires, they cant very well hang them on air, don't work, so I got into that battle feet first with the central Hudson I was always told right from the days when the constitution was written, that's the U.S. constitution, contract law is unviable, you write a contract, you sign and I sign it between us, that's it, the only way out is if one of us backs off or we do what it says, central Hudson didn't do that, he just said we don't want it and the State Court of New York said oh oh ok, and so they're still there, to take those things down, they probably put it up using a railroad car, you run a car out there and put a crane out from it, it'll stay its heavy enough, but they, as I say, they were there then and I suspect they still are, but of course now that the government and others are putting in tons of money, they'll probably get them down because they're certainly not a part of the bridge but that was a very touchy item, I said I do not understand, I did take contract law, and you sign it and I sign it even your estates and heirs and assigns are stuck with it so to speak that's the way its written, but Central Hudson, I've seen the, I've seen it I've read it, page after page after page, and them little rats they obviously know somebody in Albany because my words (?????) but they got out of it and the things are still there, and that, I got to admit, that was a major sore spot with me and several others of course.

**Interviewer:** I just have actually one more question and then Jason is going to take over, can you just speak about, you mentioned troop trains headed for San Francisco and the friend of yours who unfortunately passed away.

**Riley:** Yup he said he was on it.

**Interviewer:** Is there any more you can say about troop trains at all?

**Riley:** No not really, as I say he talked to train people that's how he deduced which way they went, they left Boston or somewhere up there as I'm told, and you know its moving out in the night and he said we woke up in the morning and we're somewhere out in Pennsylvania or Ohio still moving and heading for Frisco I mean it's the only reason I would know it is because he was a retired IBM person, lived on Long Island most of his life aside from the service and that's the way they shipped them, by train, and then he said I'm satisfied we crossed that bridge and he said its slow as I say, their speed limit was approximately 15 miles per hour I'm sure the government wouldn't want to exceed that because you don't want your bridge, your train to fall in the water really, but that's, I cant really tell you much else he did tell me that that was, I'll put it this way it probably could be determined, I suppose, I don't think they kept that stuff, anymore at least, a military secret, he was satisfied he was on that train he knew he was going to San Francisco they went through Utah, that's the way they, and then apparently the way it

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works, they go down because he remembers stopping out there for something, apparently feed or food or whatever but that's that.

**Interviewer:** Ok well thank you, we're going to switch and Jason has some questions for you.

**Riley:** Sure, sure.

(Interruption and Mr. Riley asking if the camera is on)

**Interviewer 2 (Jason):** Ok fast forwarding a little from the war time to 1974, the fire, what do you recall, like where were you, what are your memories from the fire

**Riley:** I have no, in '74 I'd have to work backwards because I've never even to this day thought about where I was, I was self employed by that time, probably sitting on my bulldozer or my backhoe or something else, lets see, '74 in those years most of my work I was still tied in to the parent, what I call a parent company, Riley homes incorporated and I would have been in the town of union vale on construction sub division and I used to do pretty near all of my brothers excavating work, to build the houses, we, at that time in history we were putting up 20 to 24 houses a year these are residences, single family, I know that because we used to talk about it a little bit, we had a good year, I would say I was out there somewhere and I certainly wasn't thinking of a railroad bridge, I heard about it, of course it made the papers, obviously would, I do know that the train was heading from east to west, I've heard all kinds of, what would I call it, educated theories perhaps.

**Interviewer 2:** Were you surprised about the fire because I had read that railroad companies had cut back on maintenance almost caused it.

**Riley:** Well that it caused as much grief as they said it did yes, because it turned out that it didn't cause as much grief as they said it did, I mean I was up there walking around the place, you burned fifty foot of a mile and a half bridge, what have you burned, you haven't burned enough to worry about, send me out a couple of loads of ties and some more rails and we'll be in business, now one thing I do know, well one thing I do know well I'll put it that way, the fire apparatus from Poughkeepsie sat down on most of it, the big trucks, the pumpers as they call them, with their...oh god...I cant even remember the names anymore, it's a big water gun set on the deck of the truck, pump water six seven hundred feet, high pressure, 1500 pounds 2000 pounds psi, that'll pump a lot of water, empty a truck in a hurry, you better (?throw your line?) in the river, but the outfit from highland, the volunteer outfit from over there drug a hose, probably a 4 incher, could have been a three, I'm not sure, I just remember talking to them about it, all the way from that side of the bridge to this side, spray on the fire from above, you know, the trucks were shooting it up this way, or trying, they weren't having much luck and little landed a little didn't, they were the primary water source as it turns out, and it was when they were pulling the hoses back, naturally you're a little more, looking around, they're looking, you can imagine what the men must have thought that were manning the hose, we pulled

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that all the way across there, they did, they pulled it all the way from the highland side, big trucks they had pumping over there to put water on the bridge over here, but it is not a secret that the new haven railroad wanted to get rid of the bridge...and there are many theories, some of which I've heard but you try and light a hunk of wood that's as solid as almost that floor, good strong piece of wood, you try and light one on fire you know we use kindling wood when we light our campfires, the boy scouts and all that stuff, and hay and whatever we can get our hands on to get it going and stick a little more wood in it, you try and light a railroad tie on fire, now I do realize they were primarily, what would you call it, soaked with oh oils, greases, whatever that dripped off the train, but I still think, myself, that was a tough job to do, to light that thing on fire but when you put the brakes on a train, air brakes, on the individual wheels, that's the way their set up, and they have been since Westinghouse put the air brake, that clamp on is a cast iron shoe, its iron against iron, tremendous pressure, you know you just cant imagine the amount of pressure they will put on and on every wheel, it will take what they call shards of iron right out of the wheel, its almost, if you've ever worked around a plumbing operation or something like that, you'll hear the terminology spalling, you, for instance with aluminum, just as an example type of thing, aluminum plate of some sort, base plate, sign or something like that, and then a big steel bolt, and they'll screw that down in there to anchor the sign for instance, that's what they use, a lot of them, mostly aluminum, a lot of them are galvanized, I'm of that too but they did have a lot of aluminum, and you try to get that bolt out several years later after, well, ten years of rain and various other nature's ingredients it'll spall, it'll bring the threads right out with it, all of them, if you can turn the bolt that is, it'll be a big one, and this is a term, this is what the railroad brake when it clamps onto that drum or that shoe big time, it'll pull them out, and those things are red hot, and they fall of course, I mean they'll just drop off like stones will, and to me, that was another thing I was, one of the men told me, but at the same time testifying to it first hand I cant do that the train approached the bridge too fast and when the engineer clamped on the brakes, its going to do what its going to do, it'll stop the train alright, but you know, the wheels didn't fall off so we keep moving, and uh, but still, it only burned a little piece of that bridge, its 1,60...or 1.6 miles long, that's over a mile and a half, and the ties are immaculate, gentlemen if you go out there today, I suspect they're still there, they're as good as the day they made them, so its, I don't know put a blanket over it or something else cover it up and no one will see it and the railroad says its officially closed down because of this that and the other thing that's it, and new haven's saying thank god, so consequently you are into a political boondoggle if you like, pressures from, you know, nobody else can tell you whether its Washington's congress or anything else pressures from all over, and different people react differently to pressures, the people that built it would have had a nightmare they would have certainly rolled over in their graves if they heard they shut the bridge down to burn the hole in it.

**Interviewer 2:** (?do you know?) if they'll ever continue use for the bridge, if they should have reopened it and repaired it.

**Riley:** Oh I think, I'll put it this way, if they'd have reopened it would have been a lot more economical for us living here because goods can still rill by rail, and to have to send them now, if you want goods here by rail from the west it has to go to Albany at Selkirk

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or to New York, the only cross over railroads and New York, if you've ever been in the grand central terminal for example, it's a nightmare, its just trains on trains on trains on trains, I mean they say we don't have a lot of trains but we got lots of trains yet they may not be running anyplace but we got them, and you go up to the Selkirk yards which took over for Maybrook there are trains, I mean, there are trains all over the place, I mean of course this is the northeast, this is where the people are, this is where the money is for whatever its worth I mean you sent them down to central Kansas there wont be any, a cornfield or something, but I definitely think the railroad would have been a big item for this region, no question about it, but the people that drive trucks aren't likely to like that, a little commentary, and the people that make tires and all the rest of that stuff that goes into them, you've got now a week if you'd like to call it that, like a boat would leave a half a mile or a mile long that are vested in not having that bridge ever work again, they just would like it I mean my stepfather was a trucker, not here, down in Florida but that's beside the point I mean I went in with him a couple times to the loading dock areas where they used to load and there's fifty sixty trucks in a row, sitting there ready to roll out, Florida being a trucking state, so truckers, that's their bread and butter, you put ten, twelve men on a train and it can go from Boston to San Francisco by itself, and they wouldn't like that you know understandably so, everybody has a vested interest, we all do, my family builds houses, when I get up on a stump, not necessarily this thing but I mean, and rail a little bit of the construction maneuvers going on, sorry about that, I'm like what the devil is that, but some of the things that are going on you know, well you're a builder, I says yeah I'm a builder but I still want to see the country survive, I don't want to see it blacktopped from boarder to boarder or wherever but anyway, that's something else, I digress.

**Interviewer 2:** Moving more toward the resurrection of the bridge and walkway, what is your role with walkway over the Hudson?

**Riley:** At this time I'm what you call a contributing member, no more no less, my physical contributions are...well...they are no more, it isn't that I couldn't go out on a fun drive I suppose but I don't feel...well I don't feel that I want to, I liked what Mr. Sepe wanted to do, and, terrible thing to say I suppose, but I have no problem giving....verbal support I guess I'd call it rather than lip service to the people that are there now, I wish them well because I think it will definitely be a help for instance, its made the local press, we talked about it at our board of directors meetings in my day, from the butment, the bridge only owns a matter of feet beyond where it joins the butment on the land on Washington Street, that's it, that's where the bridge property and whoever owns it, owns from, the rest of the lines, the one that swings out and down past Marist up here to the Grand Central tracks and others that go up to the hospital and things like that, still belong, I believe at this moment they still do, to CSX who purchased all rail rights almost everywhere in the eastern part of the country, and as you may know when Dutchess County tried to talk to them about, basically helping us or helping the railroad bridge, of which I am still a member, in good standing I believe, I hope so, if I'm not I'll have to do something about that, that they, CSX won't part with the land that the railroad tracks sit on their feeder tracks to the hospital and stuff, for the value that the county thinks they're worth, which of course will become much like the railroad bridge, a linear



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park, in other words a hundred feet wide and 300 miles long or something like that which is the railroad right of way basically in most cases, but anyway the, our leadership at the county level has I'm told put right on the table that if we cannot agree legally, we will use the eminent domain characteristic of the law of the land to acquire it for the purposes of building more what we call walkways, and right now ain't nothing on it but yet a train can still come up from the grand central tracks and I believe they can even go up to the hospital yet, they used to bring coal in of course by the ton, but will CSX ever use them again, probably not but for some reason or anything they don't want to part with them, I thought they might even consider what they call a 99 year lease or something I would think ownership would be probably be better for the purposes of what they want to do, but to have a bridge, as the original one didn't go anywhere isn't going to do you much good, well it'll do you some good you can walk across the river but still the logistics of the bridge of course, the safety factors and things like that which several people have brought up to me personally, fencing, guardrails, security, you know some guy went out there and went wacko and and and started out of his person or off his whatever came up with a machete or a machine gun or something where's the security for purposes like that, of course where is it if you're walking down main street too, but I thought about that and I was going to conjecture about those things too, but you could be anywhere, these things do happen, I'm certainly not one to recommend them but people say oh we don't want that we don't want this, look, people walk out in the middle of the bridge get out of the car and walk over and jump over the side and there's their car, I'm not really... what would they say, jumping up and down because of lack of extreme security, unfortunately like many things, we used to talk about it as groups of organizations growing up and whatnot, if somebody's looking for trouble, they'll eventually find it and you cant blame that on the rest of us, I don't believe, I'll put it that way, anyway is there anything else I can help you with, that I know something about.

**Colonel James Johnson:** We're about 10 minutes out on the end of the tape, I need him for class in a few minutes anyway, how are you sir, thank you very much, I'm Jim Johnson.

**Riley:** No problem Mr. Johnson, fine, I'm glad to make your acquaintance.

**Johnson:** I'm the Executive Director of the Hudson River Valley Institute, these are my interns.

(Interruption)

**Riley:** Very nice to meet you.

**Johnson:** Good to see you.

(Random chatter)

**Interviewer 2:** I just have a couple more questions.

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**Riley:** No problem, you ask them I'll answer.

**Interviewer 2:** The next couple questions are just simply about more of looking to the future and the state park idea which I'm sure you've heard, so the first question is, has your vision of the bridge maybe since the, from from, since the fire or now since you've heard its become a state park have your ideas of what it will become and working with Mr. Sepe now that you know it has the funds and its going to become a park.

**Riley:** It looks like it's going to happen which is more than it did before, well ill start off this way, I've been to the state's, what did they call them, the State Transportation Department, held what they called...oh god words escape me, well they were general meeting for transportation needs in this area, to get across the river, you know to move people possibly to Stewart Airport, which will become, well it is a reality at this moment, of course it was a military base before this... hm, I'm trying to think, get my thoughts gathered here, the idea of what it can become and whatnot still probably is, with the states input in their meetings, that's what I started to say, they looked at basically every prospect that might be open, could it go back to rail, I mean these are specifics, I have their, what do you call them, transcripts, several of them from these meetings, could it be better put to use for passenger only light rail, you know any possibility, it sits there, what would it cost for instance to knock it down with today's pollution standards and whatnot, there's a bridge out near buffalo, the peace bridge, just an example, I believe the last time they painted it was something over 2 million dollars, that's what I believe it was a monstrously high number, it flew since the peace meal pollution stuff have to be done, you've got to, this bridge would only be one of them, they will not allow you, the DEC people and the environmental protection, to just dump all that junk in the river, which was originally planned and then suck it out and because of that and so they had to, that went out there and they had these monstrous vacuum systems you may have seem them when you were travelling on bridges near the water as a rule, they've got plastics pipes all over the place in there, the first time I saw one they had to be 3 feet in diameter, what is that, it's a vacuum, when the painters are out there they've got this great big pipe and they're scraping and its gone, because most of the paint had lead in it and they will not let you dump it in the water, this old bridge undoubtedly has lead in the old paint, but still just going along with that, my vision, I like it now since, well I'm satisfied it wont be a rail bridge again, ill go with the states thing, it could be, this concrete deck they plan on putting on these boys with a (?rig-em-roll?) or whatever else, which could be removed if you wanted to put a rail back on it but its not likely to happen, but the passenger movement and things like that, I just think, is a wave in the future, I can just, well to pedal a bicycle from here to New Paltz I wouldn't have even though about ten years ago, but now it looks like in 5 years or so we'll be able to do that, and its flat to, I mean that's the nice thing about rail beds there aren't many hills in them, and stuff like that.

**Johnson:** It could be the longest stretch of flat land in the entire county

**Riley:** Isn't that the truth Jim, isn't that the truth sir, that's the thing you marvel, as I say I used to walk these beds and its flat, I can remember a teacher when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade going to the country school, she's going to take the group down onto the railroad

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bed, I knew there was one down there but in the bushes behind the school, and we walked up and down the railroad bed and collected, in the spring, collected pussy willows and whatever not but its flat, and there's water down there and there's water over there but we go right through that and it was fantastic, it's a major part of Americana and I think this railroad bridge definitely should become, as it is, it looks like a part of it.

**Interviewer 2:** How do you see New York State Parks as its now decided by the governor that it will become a state park, how do you see New York State Parks and the parks department working with Walkway Over the Hudson to really make this a reality

**Riley:** Well that, that puzzles me no end, because of course the title of ownership now sits with the railroad bridge people, Mr. Sepe acquired that title, I probably should have talked more on that but he got Miller in Pennsylvania, found out where he was, and had a personal contact with him you know what are you going to do with it, I mean there were a whole bunch of things you couldn't do with it anymore, you cant very well come back to New York too much either because if they got a hold of you they'd love to get some tax money out of you, you know they kept taxes rolling on this bridge and they probably would have forever until some of them finally backed off, the city and whatnot, but this, well the bridge itself, as I say once he acquired it an started to grow the idea of the practicality, that was the thing that always bothered me as I probably mentioned earlier, was the practicality of how you're going to do this and still stay, I guess you'd call it legal, I've worked in town government for several years out where I am and the big thing was, I mean they used to try to nail me a few of times about it...but anyway I says I've always told the men foremen included, right on down to the peons, whoever might be doing the work, it must be legal, that's obvious, if it isn't, I don't want you to do it, I'm not going to send ten men out in the middle of the road and have them look around while the train runs them over, I want it legal, and politics being what it is and they didn't like cooperating with me too much but that's another matter, and this is the same thing, the railroad bridge, but apparently they have looked into that, the...well, not necessarily security, but at least fencing and things like this so somebody cant chuck a soda bottle on somebody's head down below or whatever, that that unfortunately, I live on a public street and it is, it's a terrible thing to say but for some reason or another between the mailbox just before my house an the one just after my house is a collection zone for Wendy's and McDonald's debris, usually in the evening, I mean I'll tell you this but I mean I think of this bridge in the same way unfortunately I don't know what Americans are thinking of because they, I'm assuming they're American that ride up and down that road, its obviously in an automobile, you couldn't carry all of that stuff on a bike very well, and strip it off, it just happens to be my house is the right place, I go out and look down the road, there's more out there right now today matter of fact I saw it and it aggravates me no end that people would trash other peoples property, you want to trash your own I don't really care, but to trash other peoples, mine, yours, or the city

**Interviewer 2:** The bridge?

**Riley:** The bridge, and that's what I'm afraid of I definitely am, I mean I know a little bit about youngsters loving to go into the toilet and take the little toy soldier and flush it, and

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gone it disappears, that's kids, but that you can usually educate them away from, but these aren't babies that are doing these things to our communities and that will become a big thing on the bridge, I know it will as sure as you're born.

**Interviewer 2:** Actually I only have one more question.

**Riley:** Ok shoot.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you have any suggestions for the name of the state park?

**Riley:** That was on one of the flyers or one of the papers she gave me, no I really didn't, I'd like to think there are people that have put more into it than I have, even though as board of directors we sat and went over everything around the table much to the chagrin of (?) but wouldn't name it you know there are obvious names of course much as the book I mentioned before started to mention out in South Dakota, a bridge apart and things like that, but something that reaches back into the history of the bridge, certainly meet with my good approval, my approval at least, because it would tell a little something about the people that went before us, the history of building the bridge by that man O'Rourke, I think his name was Frank, I read a book about him too since I joined up with the bridge boys it was quite the uh, that man was something else he could make the bluebird walk backwards, and he did, and with this thing here.

**Interviewer 2:** Maybe O'Rourke State Park will be a reality.

**Riley:** You know I think he married a girl from this area, I say I think, its funny what you try to, I'd have to go back and look, but yeah its O'Rourke and friends or the Platt family the ones that had the vision to finance bringing this thing across without the funds it wouldn't have got to the shore the heck with across the river, and that took a lot of moxie and a lot of push by, and it was tried three times before they finally got it to go, which is something, you know things I didn't know all about, ok.

**[End of Interview]**