

Hudson River Valley Institute
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories
Andrew Tkazyik Jr. and Mayor John Tkazyik

Interviewer: My name is Nicholas, nick, and I'm at Marist, and if you could just begin the interview by spelling your full names on camera for us?

J. Tkazyik: John Tkazyik, that's j-o-h-n t-k-a-z-y-i-k

A. Tkazyik: Andrew Tkazyik jr, a-n-d-r-e-w t-k-a-z-y-i-k j-r

Interviewer: Andrew lets begin with you, where did you grow up?

A. Tkazyik: Poughkeepsie

Interviewer: And where did you go to school?

A. Tkazyik: Franklin school, Mount Carmel, Morris, and Poughkeepsie

Interviewer: How long was your family in the area?

A. Tkazyik: All my life, 61, I'm 61 years old I've been here 61 years.

Interviewer: And did your parents move to the area?

A. Tkazyik: Yeah, my mother moved from Brooklyn and my father was here.

Interviewer: And John, where did you grow up?

J. Tkazyik: I grew up right here in the city of Poughkeepsie.

Interviewer: And where did you go to school?

J. Tkazyik: I went to locally Our Lady of Lourdes High School, graduated from St. Peter's Elementary, then I graduated from Dutchess Community College and right here at Marist College.

Interviewer: Alright, and I understand that there's a family restaurant?

A. Tkazyik: Yes.

Interviewer: How long have you been in business in Poughkeepsie?

A. Tkazyik: Since, well my parents (?) went in business in 1948, I took over in 1977 and I'm still there.

Interviewer: We're still working on getting feels for the interviews.

J. Tkazyik: It's alright.

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Interviewer: Now Andrew, what do you remember of the bridge from when you were first living in Poughkeepsie as a child?

A. Tkazyik: Well I can remember, you know, the trains going over the bridge, You know days, nights, I don't remember this but my parents did tell me that there was troops going over there and it was like a... freight trains full of, you know, goods, produce, and coal and lumber, everything going over there.

Interviewer: Did the city of Poughkeepsie get much business from the train traffic?

A. Tkazyik: Actually I couldn't tell you that, I really don't know that.

Interviewer: When you took over the restaurant, did the railroad feature prominently in that?

A. Tkazyik: The restaurant when the... the bridge was not working when I took over the restaurant.

Interviewer: When did the bridge, no that's the wrong question because we know that, speaking about the fire, what was your experience with the bridge fire?

A. Tkazyik: Well the bridge fire, you know it did affect our restaurant. I mean, you know hot coals were coming down, Route 9 was closed, they had planes dropping like foam and water on the Central Hudson tanks because its right across the tracks from my restaurant, actually the bar. I mean where the restaurant is, Fairview fire company was on the roof of the bar, even though the fire company was there wetting down the building and wetting the roof down, the building caught on fire, done 17,000 dollars damage to the restaurant, but I mean it was cars burnt down the bottom of the hill. I mean everything. It was a mess, and to put the bridge fire out they had planes, I don't know where they came from, but they were going into the Hudson river, picking water up, and then going up there and dropping it off, and then dropping water on the tanks, the central Hudson tanks, because not only there's that round tank but there were big fuel tanks, gas tanks there too. They took two tanks down, Central Hudson did.

Interviewer: What was your impression of the community's reaction to the fire at the time?

A. Tkazyik: Well it was very, very devastating, very devastating, I mean, I tell you it made all the, all the major news channels, I could tell you that but I mean, and it did have a lot of impact on, because there was a lot of people from the local area working on the railroad you know, and there used to be a yard, I think it was up near parker avenue or something, where they used to hook the trains up and bring them across, you know they used to bring them so far and then come back, but there was a lot of people from Poughkeepsie working there painting, scraping, you know all the stuff like that.

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Interviewer: In terms of the city of Poughkeepsie do you think the bridge fire had a large impact on the economic strength of the community?

A. Tkazyik: Yes because I think it brought a lot of like you said, food, you know cars, you know produce, there was a lot of frozen foods on the trains they used to bring over from across the river that right over the, no trucks, they used to bring it right over on the train, I feel that it had an impact on the city

Interviewer: What do you feel is most interesting about the bridge?

A. Tkazyik: The thing most interesting I think happened to the bridge was the day of the fire, the fire was, it was unbelievable how that fire went, I mean there was firemen from everywhere, they had firemen that just started that day as firemen had to go out on that bridge and put that fire out. I mean, you know and then like you said there was Fairview, there was people from Wappinger's, Beacon, everywhere coming up to Poughkeepsie because they just couldn't, so much stuff was coming off the bridge, you know, they just couldn't control all the fire because it was from like Washington street, Parker avenue, Dutchess avenue, you know all the streets that are adjoining the bridge, there was fire on every, in people's yards, in people's garages, houses, there was a lot, big, big impact, especially near Central Hudson with those tanks.

Interviewer: Where were you when the fire started?

A. Tkazyik: Working in the restaurant.

Interviewer: So you were right there?

A. Tkazyik: Right there.

Interviewer: Did you have to, obviously you had to evacuate the restaurant?

A. Tkazyik: Well yeah, everybody had to evacuate, but it was unbelievable, it was some sight to see because hot coals were coming down, it was crazy, it was just crazy

Interviewer: Did you think the bridge would be able to be used again after that fire?

A. Tkazyik: Actually no, I really didn't, I mean after they put the fire and everything out, then when they came up there and they had the crews taking the tracks, because the tracks, I mean if you come to my restaurant I can take you in the back room and show you the railroad ties, it was so hot they melted, they bent, you know, they went out as far as they could and then they took the tracks off and then they took all the ties off, of course some of the ties and some of the things were, the bolts that were holding the tracks on were coming, they had to close Route 9 down. I mean it was, fire is devastating, really devastating.

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Interviewer: And John, ever since you've grown up, I suppose, the bridge has been unusable, what's your impression of the bridge from when you grew up?

J. Tkazyik: Well my impression of the bridge growing up was that it was, you know, just vacant and dormant there. We always just wondered well what was going to happen to it, or what, you know there's always talk of different groups getting together and Walkway was formed and the whole concept of, jeez are they going to make it a walking trail, they even talked about putting a mall up there at one time, and I can remember back a couple of years ago they talked about painting it different colors to bring some sort of attention to the presence, you know, on the Hudson river. But as far as I can remember it's just always been vacant, certainly the fire took place even before I was born.

Interviewer: And for the two of you, what was the impression of the initial movement to reuse the bridge?

A. Tkazyik: Actually the new guy that's in charge of the bridge, nice guy, I'm glad that they're doing something with it but as far as Mr. Sepe, I don't think I have any comment.

Interviewer: When did you first get involved or get interested in the Walkway project?

A. Tkazyik: When this, this new guy came and seen me. He asked me if I was objecting to anything, and this guy's great. What's his name again?

J. Tkazyik: Fred Schaeffer

A. Tkazyik: Yeah Fred Schaeffer, nice, nice man, comes in talks to you about everything. Tells you what he's going to do, and the guy's right up from about everything, very polite, a gentleman. He asked me if I'd have any objections because its going to affect my business, I have no objections because its, I feel when it gets done its going to be good for business, that's what I feel.

Interviewer: John, as a mayor have you - describe your dealings with the Walkway project.

J. Tkazyik: Well I've certainly been in discussions with Walkway and the group and we're excited about the project in the city of Poughkeepsie and that its really actually going to start right here in the city, right along our city streets, and its going to be the longest pedestrian walkway in the world, right here, and its definitely going to link both Ulster and Dutchess counties together. What its going to do to attract people to the city of Poughkeepsie and Dutchess county, the economic boost its going to bring, how its going to promote tourism, and how its going to promote public access to the river as well as the beautiful foliage of the Hudson River Valley. So we're excited about it, you know the city of Poughkeepsie along with the town of Lloyd are the lead agencies sponsoring this with Walkway, and you know we're proud that the governor has designated 16 million dollars into supporting this project, and we're happy its happening right here.

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Interviewer: Let's see, expanding more on the impact of the project on the city of Poughkeepsie, has there been any discussion on linking it with the Quadracentennial?

J. Tkazyik: Absolutely, you know the Quadracentennial is a big part of this whole celebration in connecting Henry Hudson voyage and, you know, Champlain's voyage up the Hudson River and you know being right there on the Hudson with the bridge is, you know, they're going to partner each other because we're connecting two things and celebrating both things, and we have a lot of interesting things going on in the city which are going to surround the railroad bridge because we're going to be starting also the Dutchess County Rail Trail which is going to take place right along the footsteps of this bridge. So people are going to have access to walk across the bridge from either side, ride their bike, or just go up for a walk each day. It's really going to open up access to Dutchess County and the Hudson River Valley.

Interviewer: Let's think here for a second, when the project first began was there much public activity, that's the wrong terms but, was the public very involved in the project and do you see an increasing involvement in the community?

J. Tkazyik: well there was, you know, some public presentations made before the city council, and there were neighbors that came out and spoke, certainly in support of the project, and then of course Walkway itself a big, I guess a...presentation that they made to the larger community, not to long ago, and that brought a huge crowd into, they packed the Grand Hotel. People were very interested, very excited about knowing what this projects going to be all about. What its going to take to repair the project, to get people involved, to sponsor and support the project, but you know, there will be opportunities for the people in the community definitely to voice their input in the future, we definitely want to be a partner in the process because, again, these types of projects impact neighborhoods. They impact people's daily lives whether that be to parking on streets or people's visibility or privacy that they may come in interaction with a new walkway and a new bridge being over their backyards, so we look forward to working with the state, Walkway, on collaborating and working out a lot of these issues.

Interviewer: In terms of the bridge becoming a state park, as a business owner Andrew, do you feel that the proximity of that park to your business will be a plus or a detriment?

A. Tkazyik: oh I feel its going to be a plus, you know its going to bring people in, people are going to want to go to lunch, go to dinner, you, know you might have to have a beer before you walk across the bridge. You know a little force of willpower to get you over there. I know I'd probably have to have a couple. I know, I... I... and I feel it's going to be good for all businesses not only mine, you know. What I'm saying even though I'm right there it's going to be good for, there's all the restaurants downtown, whatever, and I feel it's going to be good for everybody. Using the hotels and people are going to come, you know, its going to be good I think, really good.

Interviewer: John, do you feel the bridge project is attracting attention to the other historical locations in Poughkeepsie?

J. Tkazyik: Absolutely, and you mentioned before about, you know, about the Hudson River and the Quadra-centennial, but you know we have many exciting things going on in the city. We're expanding our walkway right along the Hudson, along (?) park, through Killrock Point, we're also going to be starting the DeLaval restoration, the second phase of the waterfront, the southern waterfront development project, so a lot of attention is being brought to the Hudson River along the city of Poughkeepsie's boundaries and, you know, that's going to funnel through, and we want it to funnel through right through to the other businesses right up through main street so the city can see that economic impact and, you know, its going to bring many untold benefits not only to restaurants downtown, but we want it to funnel through throughout the city because its going to bring good jobs with that and we want to see good things happen here. Its funny you mention about the bridge and the restaurant, one thing the walkway project talked about was where should we put the elevator, so jokingly we said, we want the elevator at Andy's, where they can get up and down the bridge, but we definitely support that as well because you know there's going to be avenues for the handicapped to get up there and we're looking at possibilities right now where the best location for that will be and we look forward to working with them. I know some easements may have to take place between the city and the state and we're going to work with them

Interviewer: Was there, as residents of the community, outside of your business and your political functions, what was your personal impression of Walkway as they moved towards the change in leadership, do you feel that the reputation of the organization has improved, and if so was there anything in particular that contributed to the poor relationship in the beginning?

A. Tkazyik: Myself, I feel that there's 100% participation in this thing now with the new guy, the other guy done everything in his power to make life for my business and people around the bridge, life miserable. He was no, he was terrible. I mean he was terrible. I mean, I don't know if I should say this but he was against, came and spoke against me putting on, I was putting in new restrooms in my restaurant, spoke against me putting in new restaurants and handicapped, handicapped restaurant. I mean handicapped facilities; he came to a meeting and spoke against it. I mean the man was mad.

J. Tkazyik: There's definitely been, you know, a complete 180 in regards to the new leadership of Walkway. Open participation, they want to be a good neighbor, they want to be a friend, they want a partner in the process with the community, with businesses as my father just mentioned, and, you know, they want to hear your input, and I think that's the change that you've seen over the years and certainly with the new leadership at hand is, they care about the future, they care about the people that are going to live around this project because, they're not just walking away after this, you know, their heart, their money, their time is invested in seeing this project succeed, and they want to make it all for the better.

Interviewer: Was the original volunteer movement on walkway over the Hudson, in your opinion, a dangerous way to start the program, is it better that the program has

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shifted to public funds now, away from the kind of community based volunteer work?

People just going up and working on the bridge, towards the move government backed revival?

A. Tkazyik: I feel its better, having the public. I mean, the government involved, city and county and whoever, you know what I'm saying, because the public funding I don't think would have worked out, I really don't.

J. Tkazyik: Yeah you're definitely talking about a lot of money for a big project and we certainly want it to be done right and again, you know, the governor dedicating his \$16 million into the project, and I know they have to raise another \$9 million to complete it but I believe there's so much positive support generated along with this project that I think they're going to reach their goal, and there's going to be many untold benefits... to this area, and you're going to see a lot of people jump on board...not to mention certainly how the property's going to be maintained. That's going to be very important. The securing of the property, you know with the state bringing it on as a state park you know it's going to bring security, its going to bring patrolled, you're going to see to it that it's up kept, and that it's clean and certainly any issues that may come around it, you're going to see the attention there, and that's something, you know, in the city of Poughkeepsie, we're going to partner with them on because it'll impact us as well.

Interviewer: Speaking of the other original plans to recycle the bridge, what was one plan that you considered to be like the most outlandish and...of the plans that were proposed for recycling it?

A. Tkazyik: Well I heard, you know, that they were going to like, take it down and, you know, probably send it, send it all the...steel to Japan, I don't know, that's what I heard but I'm glad nothing happened, you know, like that, that they didn't, and I heard the insurance to take it down was phenomenal I heard, they'd have to use helicopters and they would have a certain place to bring the steel, and bring it down on the ground and cut it and, you know, there was a lot to that so

J. Tkazyik: Same thing, you know, listen to stories of taking the bridge down and now coming to understand it. The funding for it and how much it's going to take, but actually it would have took more money to take the bridge down in pieces and getting it, you know, taken away in a timely fashion more than it is now to restore the bridge, you know. Like I told you before, they wanted to paint it rainbow colors at one time or even put up a mall, and I think there was a lot of concerns about geez, can that happen, will that happen, it is going to be safe for people, can the bridge maintain all that weight on top of it, and of course you know insurance is certainly a concern.

Interviewer: Because of the shipping traffic that passes Poughkeepsie on the Hudson and goes underneath the bridge, do you know of any special considerations that have to be accounted for with this project, because of the heavy commercial traffic up the river?

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J. Tkazyik: I tend to think not. I think that's all going to be studied and they sort of have a, you know, a good sense of what the tide will be by the wayside of the transportation on the Hudson River and they're going to plan for that. I think along the way, working with coastal representatives and local officials, I don't see that that's going to impact it in a negative way at all

Interviewer: You mentioned that they're developing the waterfront more in Poughkeepsie, that there's another trail on this side of the Hudson River there, are there...how specifically might that be incorporated and what exactly is being done with the waterfront of Poughkeepsie?

J. Tkazyik: Well remediation is now going to take place on the DeLaval, which is phase two, phase one is now done. If you go down there now you'll see the beautiful grand view in Shadows restaurant which the city of Poughkeepsie and the Bonura family have partnered along in the process, it's really a magnificent job. It's beautiful down there. We're going to see increased development, more restaurants, enhanced retail space, open space, there's going to be a marina, canoe, kayak, there's even a museum planned on the current site, and not to mention the public access its going to be along the river, and both the city and the developer are committed to maintaining that walkway so people will be able to walk all along the Hudson River shoreline along the city boundaries and that, also part of the Greenway trail in which we've adopted and, you know, are planning on continuing throughout the city, you know. When you travel down going north, you know, you get into Waryas Park and all the beautifications that have gone down there, the city wants to look at revitalizing Kaal Rock Park, and Kaal Rock Point, a lot of work needs to be done there, one thing is going to be how do we get the walkway around that point because, again, water's becoming a destination, people want to go there, they want to be able to walk around, enjoy the scenery, enjoy the river, come to nice businesses and restaurants, shop at retail stores that may be down there, and really look at the rich history that Poughkeepsie has to offer and the beautiful Hudson River Valley and this bridge is really just going to enhance that even more, and not to mention, if the elevator is put down below, people will be able to walk back and forth and hop right on the elevator and get right up to the bridge.

Interviewer: I know in the history of the city of Poughkeepsie there have been other attempts to revitalize the city and provide larger green space especially the creation of the mall zone, how they closed the roads off and created a pedestrian only mall. What were your experiences with that particular project in Poughkeepsie history?

J. Tkazyik: Well for me, I was just sort of growing up as you can say, during the mall years, but I was also just coming on the city council at the time when the changes for the mall were taking place and at the time, former mayor Colette Lafuente, her vision was to get rid of the mall and open main street back up to ridership, pedestrians, because you know Poughkeepsie at a time was plagued with a lot of crime and we're seeing areas on Main Street really becoming crime hot spots and business's were fleeing because Poughkeepsie was known as not being safe, a place to come to, a place of welcome. So that's something that city leaders and city fathers worked together on, on opening main

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street up and that has really been an exceptional project you know. It's boosting everything from downtown, more people are excited and it opens up access right down to the river and you can drive right from Main Street down to Main Street up, so for me that's how I've seen it.

Interviewer: And as a business leader?

A. Tkazyik: Well what I see, I remember when they closed it off, and all the small mom and pop stores like M. Schwartz's, a cloths place, or furniture places that was up on the mall, gone. Everything went to the South Road; nobody's coming to the city, sales, business sales. I seen my sales decrease big time, of course people are not coming shopping at the city, they're all going to the South Road and you know, you see the South Road now, its absolutely...crazy down there, now to get the mall back open, to get these stores going again and revitalize these buildings, its going to take time and money, and people are, you know, they got to take a chance as a business person in today's economy. You know, I see it from my business, but the whole thing is to get people to come in to open up a store, and stock it and do the building over, because all these buildings are, they're, they have tons of violations, tons of violations, and like John says, John's been getting a lot of requests. I think to get help the city come back Main Street, they need a, we need a store, need a grocery store, you know a store that developed to bring people there to shop. People go up there, go shopping, then they can run over to the store and buy Mexican food or Chinese food or some kielbasa or something. I don't know, but that's what you need. You need to get things going. I mean, what I see from a business, when they shut that mall off and sent everybody, all the businesses down the road it killed us, killed us, IBM, all them guys down working at IBM, they wasn't going to come to Poughkeepsie, they all went to the South Road to eat, the only time they went through Poughkeepsie was to drive home, well then they put Route 9 in and nobody stopped.

Interviewer: John would you say that, in your role as mayor, you're very focused on trying to keep Walkway Over the Hudson, you said, to feed into this revitalization of downtown and link it with reversal of the mall project?

J. Tkazyik: Absolutely, you know, you now have a positive presence and a positive feeling just as the city government of the Main Mall. Now we have a Main Street, well now instead of having a desolate bridge and, you're going to have an enhanced walkway, a beautiful walkway where it's going to be the longest pedestrian walkway in the world right here in the city of Poughkeepsie. So you know you're seeing from bad to good and we're going to see that progression unfold even more and that's going to, again, tap into the many resources that Poughkeepsie has to offer whether it be to supporting our retail space or our restaurants or the arts, the deep history Poughkeepsie has with attracting people to the Bardavon, and all the focal and destination points that take place in the city, its going to be tremendous, so its definitely a move to the good.

(random chatter and water breaks)

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Interviewer: Earlier you had mentioned that you're working with Ulster County with the bridge, have you been working with like communities across the bridge to get this started?

J. Tkazyik: No really just the city of Poughkeepsie is just a sponsor along with them across the river and being lead agencies for this project we, Dutchess County as a whole, with Dutchess county tourism and the whole Quadricentennial plan definitely will be working along with the various towns and villages across the river as well as right here in Dutchess county because we're also going to be celebrating the Mid-Hudson Bridge as well and we also have a local composer, Joe Bertolozzi who actually has what's called bridge music, and he's actually going to play the bridge right here in the City of Poughkeepsie so its going to kick off on both ends, both in Ulster and in Dutchess, working with the town of Lloyd, so its going to be a lot of collaboration, I think in the near future.

Interviewer: And what about getting like national attention or larger attention of the bridge to draw people in? What have you been doing to get that going?

J. Tkazyik: Well I would say locally right now just the excitement of the bridge project itself and, really again the governor singling Poughkeepsie out in his state of the state address put us on the map per say on this landmark that now is going to get all this money, all this resources into refurbishing that the more people are picking up on it. I think once the concept of it being the longest pedestrian walkway in the world, I think you're going to see a lot of, you know, a lot of national press regarding this and I think it'll be highlighted in every tourism magazine and place to be, and a place to go to, a destination point.

Interviewer: What did you... did you have any role in getting the money or the attention from Governor Spitzer?

J. Tkazyik: No, definitely it was the group, Walkway Over the Hudson that persisted, you know, Fred Schaeffer and his group, and everyone thought, this thing is never going to happen, its not really going to happen, what do you mean you're going to get something up there, because it just sat so long and people didn't think it was never going to become a reality. Well now it is, and really its their efforts that got this thing off the ground

Interviewer: Do you have any concerns about the project? Do you, I know you mentioned before that local people were concerned about their privacy, is there anything, any other concern?

J. Tkazyik: Well parking again is just going to be the one major concern outside of privacy of people's backyards. One thing will be security of the bridge, patrolling of the bridge, seeing to it that it will be maintained, but parking, I think, is going to be one of the key issues that we're going to need to deal with and address and I think we'll collaborate on it together and look for ways in which we can enhance parking because we

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plan on it being a lot of tourists coming in or just people who want to park and walk across and go to the other side of the river or vice versa, come on our side of the river, so many of our city streets, you know, are small, close knit neighborhoods that any large impact, you know, you'll see a neighborhood get worried or concerned about, and certainly as we know in the business downtown, whenever you talk about parking on the street, people get, because you know, oh jeez there's no place for us to go now, where do they expect all these cars to go, so I got to say we're being proactive, we're looking at various possibilities, and I think that we're going to come out with a good sound plan in the end for people to go to the park, and for neighbors to feel welcome in their own environment.

Interviewer: What are some of those plans for the parking?

J. Tkazyik: Well again I mentioned to you before about the Dutchess County rail trail, and along Parker Avenue in the City of Poughkeepsie there's property where CSX, the railroad company, ripped up their ties, and that's eventually going to be space for the Dutchess County rail trail which is going to feed into the bridge on Washington Street, and people will be able to access that, behind there there's land that can be cleared out, leveled, and graded, and there's a proposal right now in discussions about creating a hundred car parking space along Parker Avenue to meet the demands of people who want to walk on the bridge and access the bridge from Washington and Parker Avenue because that's really for you as, on foot, as a commuter per say, can access it from that first point, that's how you're going to get on. Then the plan of the elevator down the road, the plan is to look at that around near, in Waryas Park, along property that the city owns along with Central Hudson to have an elevator access for handicapped individuals as well as people who are along the waterfront who want to get on the bridge. But so far, that's some plans that are in place, and we've definitely highlighted other parts of neighborhoods where we can look at as possibilities to meet the demands of parking.

Interviewer: As far as you're business is concerned, do you have any ideas to focus you're advertising on the bridge, or to incorporate that into your business?

A. Tkazyik: No, not really, I'm just hoping that maybe they get a long rope with a bucket, maybe somebody can send a note down, and you laugh but they used to do that, but I don't want to tell you what they used to send up, swear to god, guys that worked on the bridge used to have a rope and a pail, used to send it down with the money, and they wanted two six packs, swear to god. I mean and this is fact because I know because I used to bring the beer out there and put it in the bucket and they used to pull it up guys used to work on the bridge, painting and maintaining the bridge, swear to god.

J. Tkazyik: Yeah but that was what, 19-whatever?

A. Tkazyik: Well yeah before the fire but I mean it was, I mean if I didn't see it myself, I wouldn't have believed it. It was unbelievable, but I mean as far as, like you said, he had to have the parking, and people that come to the city will have to stay probably in hotels, and the local hotels recommend, we hope they recommend local restaurants. I mean you

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know, I mean a lot of people are into the chain thing or whatever but a lot of people like family, and you know we've been in business for 61 years. Our family has, so maybe he can be the mayor and still run a restaurant too, at least help me out you know.

Interviewer: What are some other memories you have of the bridge? You mentioned the bucket.

A. Tkazyik: Well, I mean there was just so many things. I mean, like I said, at night people say oh you couldn't sleep because of the train going over and the noise the wheel, but after a while, you get like... you get used to it, you know, and you used to see, like I can remember seeing like, they used to move military supplies on there and I seen tanks on there. You used to see army trucks on there with army men in the back of the trucks. I mean, I can remember all that stuff. Yeah it was great, it really was, but see.. now I'm giving my age away.

Interviewer: Have either of you been on the bridge?

J. Tkazyik: I've been on the bridge, only so far. Fred told me not to look down and I looked down. So I have been up on the bridge. I did not go half way into the middle where the landing is, I have to admit, but I have been up there and it is quite a view. It is remarkable, and I'm sure when its all done and ready to go and it's a little bit more secured for me beneath, I'll be right up there walking across, absolutely.

Interviewer: Do you think that's going to be a concern because it's so high up that its going to stop people from going?

J. Tkazyik: Well you know there are people there who do have, you know, fears of heights and you know people will be, I'm sure people will be concerned about well the bars across or what safety's going to be over the ledge, but I think people will choose to ride their bike across, or just walk up, or even have their lunch up there maybe, but I think people will have to experience that for themselves, see how, if they're going to feel comfortable or not on the bridge.

A. Tkazyik: And I feel that once that they get a deck down there, you know, whatever kind of deck they put down, then they put a fence around where its all fenced in, you know, it'll make it better, you know. I haven't been up there but people have told me that, because when you go up there there's only that four foot fence and then there's holes, you know, you look down and...I'm not going up. I'm staying on the ground.

Interviewer: I've had the privilege of sitting through all of these interviews so far, I mean you haven't gotten all of them, we hear, what I find interesting is we hear stories about what the bridge was and what the bridge represented, our old industrial age, yet now we see the bridge as a way to attract business, a way to attract people into the Hudson River Valley, is it important, John, for you to see to it that we're not, like this generation knows what the bridge represented years ago, that it was kind of that symbol of our industrial age?

J. Tkazyik: Absolutely, and as I mentioned to you before, the deep rich history that Poughkeepsie has and what Poughkeepsie was, and that certainly cannot be forgotten because as I'm always told, never forget where you came from, and certainly my parents, my grandparents, they worked hard to establish the business that we have, as well as the many people that depended on that rail and that rail line in the past, they depended on the goods, the military service, the military personnel that needed to get things across or the different stores that the train dropped the goods and services and produce off to, so that deep history cannot be forgotten because we wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the individuals of the past that worked, even to establish that bridge, and now for us to see the successes of the future, we cannot forget the untold benefits that the past has brought us here today. So that's something that we need to cherish, not only here for the Poughkeepsie community, but definitely for the entire Hudson River Valley and I think that that history should somehow be portrayed and displayed in the walkway if there's going to be points along the bridge where people are going to walk and view different directives or focal points. I think that the history of it should play a part in it, absolutely.

(random film crew chatter)

Interviewer: When Poughkeepsie was going through the rough times with the increase in crime, kind of the decline of the local economy, your family stayed and your business stayed and you kept the business open, are you hoping that this bridge will attract more people to Poughkeepsie, which you've obviously seen a valuable place to live?

A. Tkazyik: Oh yeah, and I feel that like with the crime issue, see like if you take care of your own place, your place will take care of you. See like me, I mean, I seem like a nice guy, but you don't want to cross me. I mean, I run my restaurant tough. I mean, I get a lot of Marist kids I get, I mean, you can go on Marist and ask any of the kids about, all the kids they come to Andy's. I check your I.D., very strict, we got rules there. There's no hanky-panky stuff, you know what I'm saying, and if, and same thing with like the criminals. I mean we got broken into, we got our cars looted, we got everything, but we took care of it, you know what I'm saying. That's why we're still here 61 years later, because I run a good, tight ship there. I don't take no bull from nobody, it's my way or the highway. That's the way it's got to be, you know and you got to be nice, you can only be so nice and then that's it. You call the police or you do what you got to do, you know what I'm saying, but you got to be stern about things and run things evenly, smooth, always be above board, be nice to people, always take the high road. So I told Johnny, always take the high road, and once you take the high road and once the people know where they're at, then if they want trouble, give them all the trouble that they need because 911 now and the police are there like nothing, and they take care of business, not a problem, but I see, a lot of things before the police get there. I try to handle it myself, or my employees, I got some good employees that have been with me for a while, older people and they, we don't allow no nonsense, we don't.

J. Tkazyik: Perception is definitely a key point, because again, the past has always been, well Poughkeepsie is it safe to go there, and many people to this day, that perception is

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Andrew Tkazyik Jr. and Mayor John Tkazyik

still out there that you know, Main Street isn't safe to walk at night and that's something that the city has been working on for many years now and something that I'm going to continue in the revitalization efforts, opening up the Main Street, redeveloping the waterfront, seeing positive business come in, attracting a supermarket, and keeping the businesses, supporting the businesses that have been in this community for many years, and knowing that there's a city hall that's also going to work with the community is a key to redevelopment anywhere because people want to know that you're here to work for them as well and that its not just one sided, but definitely perception will be key in making people feel safe, and knowing that they're welcome coming to Poughkeepsie and this area, again is just going to benefit the bridge and overall business in general.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Jake Racette