



The Weston Voices Oral History Project

Living World War II: The Letters of W. Scott Hill



Transcript of a talk by Louise Hill (Lisa) Paulson about her parents Scott and Betty Hill, who were deeply involved in many aspects of town life for five decades. On October 10, 2015, Mrs. Paulson read from a selection of her father's letters and shared her and other family recollections based on her book, "Living World War II: One Family in Weston Connecticut".

A Talk Sponsored by the
Weston Public Library

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The video of her presentation as well as this edited transcript are archived at the Weston Historical Society and the Weston Public Library. They are also available on their respective websites. The views expressed by Mrs. Paulson are her own.
Photos courtesy of Mrs. Paulson. Video production by Katz Films.



The Weston Historical Society's "Weston Voices" Project

Presents

"Living World War II: The Letters of W. Scott Hill"

A presentation by Lisa Paulson, Scott & Betty Hill's Daughter

Scott and Betty Hill were long-time Weston residents, active volunteers, and an integral part of town life. Scott had a career with General Electric as an electrical engineer, based in New York. Gradually finding their suburban town in New Jersey "too narrow-minded," they moved to Weston in September, 1939. Scott was relocated shortly after the war but the family returned in 1959 to stay.

As Lisa Paulson puts it, "both parents always plunged into the life of their town and church." Among other things, Scott was a dedicated conservationist, active in the Aspetuck Land Trust and the Weston Watershed Committee. He was also an early president of the Weston Historical Society. Indeed, he began the Society's first oral history project and his interviews are archived at the Coley Homestead. A group of them have also been digitized and are accessible on the Weston Library's website. Scott died in 1995 at age 93.

Scott's wife Betty was keenly interested and involved in progressive social and political affairs, both here and abroad, and a lifelong advocate for women's rights. One of the earliest members of the League of Women Voters when it was founded in 1920, she later helped start the Weston chapter. In 2000, the local League inaugurated the annual Betty Hill Forum on International Affairs in her honor. Betty died in 2001 at 102.

*From dusty boxes in their attic, their daughter, Louise (Lisa) Paulson, dug out hundreds of old letters her parents had written – weekly reports that each of them had sent back to their parents, not uncommon at that time. Lisa was especially intrigued by the accounts her father wrote that coincided almost exactly with the duration of World War II. She gathered his notes and recollections and published them in her book, *Living World War II: One Family in Weston, Connecticut*. (Available from the publisher, Thistlefield Books, as well as Amazon.com).*

Mrs. Paulson read highlights from the book, recounted details of how her parents came to Weston, and shared her own memories of growing up here in a talk at the Weston Public Library on October 10, 2015. The following is a lightly edited transcript of that talk. The complete video is available on the Weston Historical Society's website, WestonHistoricalSociety.org.

My parents, Scott and Betty Hill, who were first here from 1939 - 1945, came back in 1959, built a house on Lyons Plain Road, and got immediately and deeply, deeply involved in the life of the town. They just poured their hearts and all their energy into this town they loved until they died. Some of you may know that Scott was very much involved with the Aspetuck Land Trust and the

Weston Watershed, the Red Cross, and the Common Council. He was also a president of the Weston Historical Society.

Even when he was in his late 80s and early 90s he was going around town, taking it upon himself to jot down memories from the "old folks" in town with his tape recorder.

Betty was involved with the League of Women Voters and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. They were both extremely involved with the Norfield Congregational Church.

They felt that this was an ideal base from which to take responsibility for the town, and even beyond the welfare of the town. As a matter of fact, Betty felt that she was Message Central, sort of connecting everybody in town from the couch in her living room. She had memorized almost everybody's telephone numbers and just kept everybody in touch.

I'm here, actually, to talk about an earlier time when Scott and Betty, and my brother, Douglas and myself, came to live here. It was this period that inspired the book. It came about after my mother's death. She died in 2001, at age 102. The whole family was up cleaning out her attic, and what we found most of were many, many boxes filled with old family letters.

Our family, Scott and Betty in particular, had perhaps the peculiar, quaint habit of writing home to our parents when we left home. We would write once a week, typewritten letters, talking about what had happened during our last week. What particularly interested me was finding the letters that Scott had written to his parents, who were out in Reno, Nevada, where his father was a professor. They detail, chronologically, everything that was happening during the six years that we lived here, from 1939 to 1945, which were the exact years of World War II.

This book came about because I took excerpts from all these letters that had to do both with our family life here in Weston and also bits and pieces from my father's work in New York. He was an electrical engineer for General Electric.

In the early years he was sent around troubleshooting in power plants. Then, during the war, he was working with GE contracts with the Navy for various kinds of war work that he kept saying, "I had a really fascinating day today, but I can't tell you anything about it until after the war."

How did we get to Weston in the first place? The family had been living in a suburb in New Jersey to be close to New York, commuting by ferry at that point. It was a suburb that they began to see, increasingly in the late 1930s, as just not a healthy place to bring up children. It was very monolithically WASP, narrow minded, and they were just increasingly uncomfortable.

They began searching possible other places where they might move, still within commuting distance. They were hearing about the towns in the southern Connecticut coastal area, so they got in the car and they drove up. The first place that they went to was Westport.

My mother thought maybe she could get some important information at the post office. She went in the post office in Westport and began talking to people in line. She said, "Where can we find the best schools?" Everybody in line said, "Go to Weston." They drove a little bit farther up and found this very, very rural town of 750 people, more or less, primarily made up of farmers with deep roots in the lands that went back generations, trades people, and a huge variety of artists, writers, musicians, crafts people, dancers, entertainers, and so forth.

It was a very interesting and diverse mix that they felt would be exactly right. Somehow, they were put in touch with a possible house. This was a very dilapidated house at the north end of

Lyons Plains Road, right at the juncture of Davis Hill, Valley Forge and Kellogg Hill. I'm sure you know the spot, right next to the bridge that they came to call Troll Bridge.

They found out that the house was owned by Ruth Fox, one of the daughters of Ella Treadwell, who lived in the house right across the street, and whose family went back many generations. The Treadwell's began telling them stories about the local lore. For instance, there was a hermit who lived in a cave under Old Rock, the cliff that rose up right behind the Saugatuck River, which ran by this house that they were looking at.

They also heard about Fred Davis, the wild, bearded man who lived in a shack across from the gorge on Valley Forge, and who dug graves in the Emmanuel Church Cemetery for a few dollars, and scared the children to death.

Ruth Fox said she was willing to rent them the house for \$70 a month. We were thrilled to death, and moved into it in September, 1939. My brother was 5, and I was 11, and we began taking the school bus to Hurlbutt School.

They had found out that Weston at that time had no stores, no post office - nothing -- except this wonderful new school that had been built in 1934 to replace several run-down school houses around town.

I want to read you several passages from my book here that will give a flavor of what life was like, and what we were coping with as the war came on. A lot of these excerpts are very clipped. They're almost sound-bites because this is the way my father wrote, every Sunday, to his parents.

February, 1940.

After a huge snow storm, we had to put on the chains to get the Ford out. I've learned to always carry chains, a shovel, and extra gas. Louise had her friend, Margaret, out from New Jersey, and for two days they talked boys, made out skits, skated and skied on the Amazon Hill, and climbed to the top of Old Rock.

Betty has been collecting 78 RPM classical records with coupons from *The Saturday Evening Post* but we can't afford a record player, yet. We've joined the Norfield Congregational Church across town, where a discussion group on the war and peace had just started.

March, 1940.

A sleet storm cut the power lines, and Betty began cooking in our huge colonial fireplace. It's helpful to have the swinging crane to hold the pot over the flames, and the Dutch oven to keep food warm.

We've been hauling water from the river and lighting candles. After a week, with still no power and the school closed because of no heat, Betty and the kids drove to Harrisburg, to Betty's parents.

I came home every night, built up a fire to keep the furnace going, and ate with friends who did have electricity. The damage from this storm has actually been worse than during the 1938 hurricane.

September, 1940.

With an idea of building here at some point, we've been looking at some local land for sale. It's mostly \$1,000 an acre. Too high for us.

One reason we'd left New Jersey was that it was over-involved with fixed ideas. Now we find a polarized situation here over town politics. There's currently a slate of seven locals, excluding all New Yorkers and newcomers, so we're trying to get non-partisan representation, including for the school-board, a caucus system.

(Louise interrupts her reading of the diary entries for a personal aside as a prelude to the next entry: " I should mention that one of my early obsessions I had when we moved here was that I wanted to raise goats. Finally, after much push/pull, my parents gave in, and we did have goats.)

The goats have learned to get out of everything. I put in new posts and reinforced their fence with chicken wire. Louise says they watch how we open the gate and then copy us easily.

October, 1940.

We enter October and there's still some of our known world left. A few months ago, we wondered. I suppose a likely source of trouble would be Japan next. If a few people really knew where Russia stands then the picture would be clearer. Maybe Mr. Stalin wishes he, himself, knew. Probably, he lives from day-to-day and hopes for the best.

April, 1941.

We've been listening to the news of the rule in Yugoslavia. Everyone here recognizes that we're as good as in the war, except officially. Many think we will have a force over there in a year or two. Some think there is a very long war ahead. I doubt there will be any such force, and wouldn't be surprised to see the whole thing unravel rapidly, perhaps in a year.

Last night we discussed the possibility of a few Allied victories in the Balkans, giving courage to Congress to rise up. There's a lot of serious discussion of all of us in the office going back to work Saturday mornings, perhaps all day Saturday, as is done in many factories and in our construction department. I'll be sorry to make the change but this is not a time when we can consider personal desires. If we do, we will get nowhere.

I suppose there never was a war with so many opinions floating around about it. I don't think much of the Lindbergh isolationist point of view, that of America first.

October, 1941.

At a PTA meeting, Franklin Pierce Adams, a New York columnist, told the story of a visitor who came to Redding, inquiring where he could find a shrine to Mark Twain. The native said he lived there all his life, and never heard of a Mr. Twain. The tourist described where he was supposed to live, how he looked, and that he was usually dressed in white. The native replied, 'Oh, sure. You mean Sam Clemens. Looks like a lion.'

November, 1941.

Doug...[Louise's brother]...reported going out with kids for Halloween. He was excited about how bad they'd been. Scaring a cook, ringing bells, throwing rotten apples at a car. The driver got out, got mad and yelled that he'd throw the boys in jail. Doug just stood there and told him they don't throw little boys in jail, so he couldn't. When other kids came around he

was hanging out of his bedroom window trying to scare them, so he had a thoroughly good time.

We picked up Mike Brooks and his wife to take them to his talk at the school. We found them very pleasant. She's a lively, intelligent person who seems to be on guard all the time, to protect her husband, and to note how others take him. He's quiet, whimsical, a little plump with a gray mustache. He told the crowd he was the world's worst speaker, and promptly sat down, got out his books and read to the audience for about an hour in his Harvard accent. A few were disappointed that he just read, but most enjoyed the hour.

I must buy at least one new tire and get another retreaded, while there's still rubber. We let it go until the fabric showed.

December 14th, 1941.

The radio seems to have found its stride in this war reporting. Until Roosevelt talked we had all sorts of wild reports and commentators orating all through the house, if we let them. Things have moved fast, and with little or no opposition.

At the moment, it sounds as favorable as can be expected. Apparently San Francisco had lots of excitement, or at least alarms. Tuesday we were getting rumors thick and fast in the elevators. This was in New York. I heard the girls talking, 'Germany declared war on us. Enemy planes are an hour away, or a mile away.'

As we returned from lunch two fire departments near us rolled out and started their sirens. In a few minutes they blew again to indicate the all clear. An hour later it all started over again, though the sky was perfectly clear. We all went on working and disregarded the fuss.

However, I did sit down to set up an emergency call system for disasters, so that if one occurs we can reach out to a hundred men, phones or not. The next morning there was another alarm as I came into the office, but no one even listened this time. We do rather expect a few bombs, just for good measure, sometime.

I can think of a few places I hope they don't hit, the utility services and so forth. Generally, I'd say that everyone is calm and collected. No one was surprised, although a little disturbed, when two British battleships were lost at the same time, a real blow.

A doctor told Betty in Weston that lots of people have been coming to her in a state of nerves. There was feverish activity for a few days, by the air raid wardens in New York to find out what they should be doing. But now they know, and have settled back.

Our office stays in the corridor on our 20th floor for hours, and one person stands at the set-back roof to put out incendiaries. I've taken to carrying a pocket flashlight, such are my preparations for participating in the latest war.

May, 1942.

On calling around about starting up a bus line, we found that it would cost \$8.00 per month to ride the commuter bus, if it goes through. The school bus would be used, making earlier runs to Westport Station. Now I pay \$23 on the railroad, so it would total over \$30 a month to get to New York. Life would be simpler in a place like Reno, where I could walk to work like you, Father, and have more time at home. So far though, we're surviving, and are

getting by with our rationed gas. General gas ration across the country is due to start July 15th.

June, 1942

Friday to the Cooper's for dinner. Leo and Frankie Godowsky arrived on their new scooter. It's like a motorcycle with a small side car, except with very small rubber-tired wheels. You sit on the engine. The car is only a tin box. However, it works, and it must have awoken all the neighbors when we broke up, after midnight.

We're changing our church hour to 10:30, and holding Sunday School at the same time to conserve tires and driving. Saturday, I saw flocks of fortresses, etc., over the parade in New York. Then, that night, pursuit planes flew circles over us in Weston, while we were sitting here in the garden before dinner.

As to our vacation, we're staying here, because of tires and gas, and also the expense of hotels if we were to go away. It's very pleasant here. We were invited to one estate over near Pleasantville in Westchester. But, due to gas, we declined.

There's no gas left anywhere around the New York area, and won't be, until July 1st quotas can be used. By luck, I got six gallons Saturday after stopping at six stations, all dry. Most of them just closed up, and the employees went home. You can't even get air.

July 1st, 1942

Commuter bus starts. It will start at our corner. We sealed the deal with Ruth Fox, and bought the approximately two-acre field next door for \$1,500 cash.

July, 1942.

On Thursday I explored the woods and swamps west of our nearby hills. Had a fine time with compassing paper, trying to map it. Went in at the Reiner's brook [i.e. Fritz Reiner, famous symphony conductor], and after an hour of following old lumber trails and roads, keeping track of turns, came out into civilization and got located on the map. Then back in and after 20 minutes arrived again on a road and knew where I was. I traveled about eight miles in absolute wilderness -- no human habitat in evidence. Put up a few markers for the future.

We have about a hundred feet of beans, all we can possibly eat and many to give away. We got in the hay with all the neighborhood children working, and so it went fast. Have about three quarters of a ton of good clover, and the barn smells very sweet.

September of 1942.

Nelson Sprackling, a noted singer and pianist here, wanted to help the war effort and is now working at a factory, 66 hours a week, on a night shift, making machine guns.

Doug asked me, 'What would you be if you were in the war?' I said, 'I'd try for officer.'

He was startled and said, 'What?'

'Yes,' I replied. He thought a long time, and then, 'How many people do you have to kill to be an officer?'

December 1942.

We've had a fairly mild winter so far, fortunately for those burning oil. We keep some rooms shut off to save our coal, but today the house was 55 degrees because of strong winds and zero temperatures.

Most people are keeping their houses at 60. At the moment, 60 would feel warm. Betty found that it was 40 on the kitchen floor, and apples were freezing. The goats are shivering. They've grown woolly coats that stand out straight.

Betty's been using powdered milk for making ice cream, soups, cocoa, etc. Tastes good. She found a pound of butter, and I got two tons of coal, so we're set for a while. Butter and meat are very scarce.

May, 1943.

I was in New York Wednesday night to speak on electronics. I was within five minutes of the end of my talk when the aid raid sirens blew. We blacked out the room, as the curtains weren't tight enough, and we were on top of a high building. So I had to fill in, and talked, and answered, and asked questions for another hour. Peculiar feeling, speaking to men you can't see. At 10 o'clock, the all-clear siren sounded, the lights came on, and we wrapped it up.

June, 1943.

Had the Howard Smiths for dinner, eating two of the Thorps' rabbits. At 10:45 I got a call about an air raid alert, so we said goodbye in a hurry and rushed the guests out to make a run for home down David's Hill road. I had to patrol the road, as usual. The alert was still on after 12 o'clock, so I quit and came to bed, just as the all-clear sounded. A lot of monkey business, once we all know what to do.

November, 1943.

Friday I got home to great wailing. It seems the Thorps gave Betty some red points--the ration coupons for meats, butter, fat, oil, and cheese. And knowing she'd have a houseful, she bought a fine, six pound roast for four dollars, and 72 points. I put it on the back porch to cool for an hour, then heard a commotion. Rushed out in the dark, to find a dog making off with the whole thing. Never could find it, so went without meat for a week.

...

[At this point Lisa Paulson concludes her reading of her father's diary entries and begins to reflect on some of her own memories.]

In January, 1945, there was a bomb shell. My father got word that he was suddenly being transferred out of New York to Buffalo, so in April 1945, we had to move in a hurry. There were no houses for rent anywhere in the Buffalo area. Finally, they arranged for an exchange with a house that we were living in, on Lyon's Plain, so we were there for a year.

Now, I'm just going to add a few of the recollections that both my brother and I came up with after I had written this. This is Doug, and you have to remember he was only five when we moved there, so he says his memories are a little sketchy.

On gas rationing. A trip to Compo beach in Westport on Long Island Sound was a big deal. I remember Mom used precious gas coupons to drive the 1941 Pontiac, with six of my buds -- two on each running board, two in the car, and a lot of whooping and hollering as we roared down Lyon's Plain road. We got extra coupons, because Mom was taking graduate courses at Danbury.

On being patriots. A short time after Pearl Harbor, Dad and Joe Leopold, unbeknownst to their wives, went to Westport to volunteer for the military. But they were turned away because they were too old. They were in their mid-30s. Near the ski hill on FPA's land, that's Frank Adams, I witnessed maneuvers of Connecticut National Guardsmen, rifles bristling in the noon-day sun, scurrying from bush to bush. A whistle blown to signal the end of an exercise.

On food, he said, Many Westonites grew victory gardens. Canning was a big deal. We were the only ones in town with a dehydrator. I remember the smell of the machine in action, and how Mom sealed and labeled each output in wax paper. Remember, this was before plastic. All the veggies except carrots tasted like cardboard.

Mom would send us out to the woods to harvest fiddleheads and dandelions, because we were at war. We managed to eat them only if they were dressed with bacon and vinegar. Families contributed time and resources to start a hot lunch program at school. Mom often delivered food and worked in the school kitchen, which buzzed during summers, when all the mothers in town were urged to bring vegetables from their gardens to freeze and can. For five cents, pupils could get a meal of chicken, dumplings, a vegetable, and a desert. A government subsidy provided milk.

On local war efforts. Gathering milkweed pods on Blueberry hill for Air Force life jackets.

I loved the wilderness quality in Weston, the great natural beauty of open, wild spaces at that time. The ability to ride off on my bicycle to sit on a rock at the edge of the reservoir, and watch the sun setting over pristine hills. Or, to get lost in dense woods. Or to sit scribbling poems in solitary whiffs on a narrow roof, cantilevered over the swirling Saugatuck River at the bottom of our field. Skating up the frozen river during rare winters when it was cold enough to freeze. Beneath dark over-hanging overhanging hemlock boughs, I felt like a mythic Nordic ice titan.

Many adolescent girls developed a passion for horses. Mine, though, was goats. I remember promising the powers that be that I'd stop any number of nasty habits if only my parents would let me raise goats. When they relented, partly because it was a patriotic thing to do to produce your own food in wartime, and also because they knew it would improve my sense of responsibility and self-reliance. I was in heaven.

There were tough times, especially on the frigid winter pre-dawn mornings when I had to go to the barn, in the dark, to muck out the stalls. Here was my typical routine: At 6:00 AM, when the sharp wind is whipping away the last stars, the thermometer reads minus 15, and in the light from the faint power in the East, I slip around crazily on rough ice, balancing my bucket of hot water. I could just make out the goat barn ahead.

Once inside in the comparative stillness, I paused to listen to the gentle creaking of the rafters. Scattered hayseeds are swirling on the floor, blown up by the wind from beneath wide cracks from the boards. Teetering on a plank high up that forms a crude hay loft, I tossed down large armfuls of musty clover and alfalfa, releasing clouds of choking dust.

Inside the goat stall, Bonnie and Bambi lie huddled together, shivering slightly. Bonnie complains of the unusually bitter cold with little questioning bleats, and lurches to her feet. She paws the platform impatiently. Bambi struggles up, too, and thrusts her head into the feed trough, and butts her empty pan in anticipation.

With Bonni on the milking stand, I lean in to her furry flank, ready to grab her leg in case she decides to stick it in the milk bucket. She's producing well, and I lug the warm pail in to the kitchen, weigh the milk, strain it through cheese cloth, and record the amount. Next, carrying water and hay, I escort the goats down to the lower barn, the goat house, where they'll spend the day. After forking out the dirty hay and sweeping the night stall, I must hustle to get ready for school.

In warm weather, I hiked out to the dewy fields, and pounded in stakes to tether the goats for the day. Frequently, we would have to chase them when they'd escape from their smaller fenced corral, and get into the neighbors' gardens or worse: nibbling poisonous laurel hellebore leaves.

For five years, I was a happy goat herder running my own small business, selling milk to my family and a couple of neighbors with special medical needs. I also served as midwife a number of times, and was around the Faulkner's when Bonni was mauled by the neighbor's dogs. Mostly, I just logged my goat milk.

When gas rationing came on, Mother had to bite the bullet and get on a bicycle for the first time. I still have visions of her wobbling back and forth up Lyons Plain, always wearing a skirt or dress, determined to learn in order to serve as an air raid warden.

The only one in the family with a stomach to slaughter the chickens was Mother. This was supposed to be Doug's job, and he would spend inordinate amounts of time sharpening his axe and setting up the stump, delaying the moment of execution. If he couldn't bring himself to the task, neither my father nor I could stand to be in the vicinity. My mother would coolly step in, and soon the hapless, headless fowl was careening around the yard spraying blood. Then, both Doug and I were expected to pitch in and pluck and then burn off the pinfeathers. That smell lingers still in my memory.

In summertime, there'd often be a call from Peggy Ward, or Lillian Delarmy, or Leota Haul, all from down Lyons Plain, saying the wild strawberries or blueberries were ripe. Did we want to come along on a picking expedition? We'd drop everything, grab our buckets, and tramp up to the brambly woods off 11 O'Clock Road or Kellogg Hill, anticipating the fine pie that night.

Symphony conductor Fritz Reiner, who lived a half mile up Davis Hill Road, occasionally rode the commuter bus into New York. His chauffeur would drive him down to wait at the bus stop in front of our house. One time, hearing me practicing cello, he was curious. He came to the door, sat down, and chatted about my musical ambitions. I found him friendly and encouraging.

Also on the subject of my cello and the commuter bus, one day I was riding the bus and noticed that Helen Keller and her companion, Polly, were also aboard. Gathering my courage, I fell into conversation with her through the companion. I got to talking about my cello playing. Miss Keller brightened, and saying that this was her favorite instrument. She perceived it like wind in the pines.

In conclusion, as terrible as the war years were, in spite of the myriad inconveniences, the fact that they were tinged with the flavor of the often surreal, idyllic life we developed in that precise time span, 1939 to 1945, made our sojourn in Weston an almost magical time in my memory.

No doubt, part of this was because everyone in town and in the country drew closer together. Both because of sharing was necessary, and because everyone was united behind the massive threat of a brutal war. A sense of community developed. It was considerably stronger at that time than in our more politically fragmented life now.

My memories are rich with many subsequent visits to my parent's home after 1959, with my husband, and two sons, and their families. Yet it was that earlier time in Weston, exactly bracketing the war years, that hold a special significance. That encapsulated period -- that life -- has for me ballooned to almost mythic proportions. Of course, there were hardships. We scraped along with limited food, fuel, tires, shoes, stockings, meat, sugar, butter and much more, often with unpleasant substitutes. We had to bike or walk when we could no longer drive our cars. Clearly, there was terrible anxiety in families with servicemen, who died in great numbers. There were three out of four older brothers of a high school classmate who were killed.

I was fortunate to be just under the age when my contemporaries might be drafted. But there was a sense that this was a just, good war. There was enthusiasm and strong patriotism when we entered the conflict in 1941. It was a time for heroism. For me, there was a romantic aura about the era. All America was united in a singular purpose. We put our military and their uniforms on a pedestal. They were going to save Europe, defeat Hitler, then Japan.

It was a righteousness, with a fierce joy about living with the sacrifices and hardships. We reveled in our victory gardens and volunteering for defense work, supporting the troops, entertaining them, rolling bandages, darkening our windows with blankets, and spotting planes. The petty kinds of concern, small crimes, and misbehaviors seemed to melt away or recede significantly in the face of our collective talk. These were memories to cherish.

Thank you.

Audience Member: Not from that period, but when we moved here, one of the first stories I heard about your parents was that they were planning a trip to the Himalayas or something. They spent three weeks in a tent in the cold out back of their house, getting acclimated.

Audience Member: I was once a party and your mother was in a beautiful red dress. Scott said, somebody complimented her on her dress, and he said, "Betty made that dress. And when Betty sews, everything stops."

Lisa: She made all her clothes, all my clothes. Saved bits of antique lace, always had some sort of unusual ornament going.

Audience Member: When your mother was in the house by herself, somebody broke in next door. This is quite a while back. She apparently heard it, and then they came to break into her house. She heard them smash a window or something, she yelled, "Get out!" They did. They ran away. The next day she said, "If it was my time, it was my time."

Lisa: I remember that. That was when she was pretty blind, too. She was blind the last 10 years of her life. A good part of that time, she lived alone, cooking, entertaining, continuing right on.

Audience Member: Tell a little bit about the Godowsky's. That is such an interesting family. They lived on 136, in that house you can hardly see.

Lisa: Leo Godowsky was a superb violinist. He played at the White House several times. He was also the inventor of Kodachrome. His wife, Frankie, was Frances Gershwin, George Gershwin's sister.

We used to go up there for chamber music concerts. The minister then, Clive Holbrook, the minister of Northfield Church, who was my cello teacher. He was a very fine cellist, and he was invited up there often to play in string quartets.

Early in the war, my parents would go up there. Dinner would be served by the butler. Four course meals, fine wines with every course.

Towards the end of the war, all the servants had left and gone off to war jobs. Frankie and Leo were doing their own work and, as I said here, tooling around in their little scooters, [laughs] a tin can. They were great.

Audience Member: Thank you very much.

[applause]