



# The Weston Voices Oral History Project

A Conversation with



Patricia Heifetz

*Founder & Editor, The Weston Forum*

*Interviewed by Arne de Keijzer on July 30, 2015 in her apartment at  
Meadow Ridge, a retirement community in Redding, CT*

Sponsored by the

**Weston Historical Society**

*With the generous support of the*

Weston Education Foundation and the Friends of the Weston Senior Activities Center

The full video as well as this transcript are archived at the Weston Historical Society and the Weston Public Library and can also be accessed via their respective websites. The opinions expressed in this interview are those of Mrs. Heifetz alone and do not reflect those of the interviewer, the Weston Historical Society, its contributors, or other supporters of the Weston Voices project.  
Photo credit: Julie O'Connor



## Weston Voices

A conversation with Patricia Steiner Heifetz

July 30, 2015

*[Editor's note: This is the full transcript of the 50-minute video interview that accompanies it. Some questions and answers have been edited for clarity. Editorial annotations are in italics. For a much more complete understanding of Mrs. Heifetz's contributions to Weston we refer you to the Weston Public Library, where a nearly complete set of issues of The Forum have been archived.]*

**Arne de Keijzer:** Hello. I'm Arne de Keijzer, who along with my colleague Neil Horner are spearheading Weston Voices, an oral history project sponsored by the Weston Historical Society.

Today is July 30th, 2015. I'm here with Patricia Steiner Heifetz, a resident of Weston for five decades. I'm interviewing her at her apartment in Meadow Ridge, a retirement community in Redding, Connecticut.

Pat was a strong presence in Weston, known for her vigorous opinions, expressed often in public meetings and, particularly, through the editorials she wrote in *The Weston Forum*, the indispensable local newspaper she founded in 1970. Her policy, still to be found on the masthead of the paper today was, "We seek to present all news and issues pertaining to Weston in an accurate, objective, non-partisan way."

Thank you for welcoming us into your home, Patricia. Let me begin by asking you about your background. Where you were born? Where were you raised? Where did you go to school, and what was your major?

**Pat Heifetz:** I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, which is important now, because I can barely breathe because of the terrible, terrible, terrible air in Youngstown. In the winter we would go to Florida. Then my father died when I was 11, and we moved to Florida.

I lived in Florida until I went to college. I went to college by looking at a map and picking a place far away from Florida. There it was. It was called Wisconsin. That is how I have a degree in the School of Journalism, from the University of Wisconsin, and also a degree in Political Science.

**Arne:** Your husband Paul was also well-known in Weston, of course, and very much respected for his volunteer work on the Planning and Zoning Commission and other Boards, as well as for his wonderful paintings.

When did you meet him, marry him, and when did you move to Weston, and why? What was so attractive about the town?

**Pat:** Actually, we did not intend to live in Weston. We were there temporarily, looking and deciding where we were going to go and live, because we had been living in Copenhagen for three years. Then we came back and we lived in Ridgefield for a year, looking for where we were going to go. Then Paul decided he was going to start commuting to New York, so we had to move from there, because you can't commute to New York from Ridgefield [as easily].

We found a place quickly. It happened to be in Weston. We said, "OK, we'll just live here a short time while we find a place to live." That was more than 50 years ago. [*specifically, 1964 – ed.*]

**Arne:** It was total serendipity?

**Pat:** Yes.

**Arne:** When you moved here, what was the town like? What were your first impressions?

**Pat:** It was [just simply right]for us. It was just a place to be at the time. Of course, we had kids. Unfortunately we did not know that the school that one of my daughters was going to go to had burned down [*What is now the North House of Hurlbutt burned down in 1963 –ed.*]. She couldn't go to school in Weston. They sent the kids to Westport to the Temple Israel there when they had rooms during the week.

Everything was very temporary as far as we were concerned. My in-laws lived in Clinton, Connecticut, so that was why we ended up in Connecticut at that point.

**Arne:** At some point you got very involved with the town. You started to know people and get acquainted. Tell us about that early period.

**Pat:** Yes. At first, well, because when you have children, you start meeting people right away. Then I was pregnant. I had one son who was two and my two daughters. One daughter was in the last class out of Staples High School from Weston and then [the other], Merrilee, who was in the school that burned down which [was rebuilt and] is now the North House.

Then I got involved because I was always very active in the League of Women Voters....That's how I ended up with the newspaper because I started off with the League of Women Voters covering Weston's first Charter Commission [in 1967].

They called in everybody from different groups in town and asked one question: What is the biggest lack in Weston? Everybody said lack of communication. I realized this was foolish of me to be doing what I was doing, and I should work on a newspaper. Well, there weren't any newspapers in Weston. Weston had absolutely no communication.

Westport was the closest one. Every time they would say, "The First Selectman" or the this or that, they meant Westport. They never meant Weston. They never covered Weston at all. That's when Weston was buying the Revson property. There was a big vote, but of course no one knew how it came out. [*The estate had belonged to Martin Revson, younger brother of Charles, who founded Revlon cosmetics empire. Martin was an executive in the company. Voters agreed to acquire a 34-acre portion of the estate in 1969 for \$290,000 and subsequently built the Middle School and Revson Field on the property. –ed. ]*

So I took paper and with my little typewriter I wrote a thing and I called it *The Weston Forum*, and we passed it out to people at the Memorial Day Fair. Between the parade and the fair we passed out all these papers telling them what had happened in this referendum. That was the first people knew about it.

Anyway, I thought that was the end of that as far as I was concerned. Then one of the people sitting there was Dick Voigt, who owned the Pepper Mill restaurant in Westport he had started.

He said to me, "You're going to have advertising." I said, "For what," because this was the end as far as I was concerned. He said, "Well, you have to keep this up, you know. This is what Weston needs, it's a newspaper. I will keep my ad in there as long as you have the newspaper, as long as you keep it going."

I laughed, but sure enough, once the paper came out and people started calling me up about this and that and everything else. We became the communication center. The next thing I knew, it was the following week, and then the following week. Pretty soon it was August and the first issue of *The Weston Forum* came out on August 5th, 1970. That's how it happened and it just keeps going. Everybody in town worked on that paper.

**Arne:** Talk a little bit more about the mission, because you told us earlier that basically, in addition to the editorial statement that I read you said, "Turning a discombobulated area into a community."

**Pat:** In the first letters to the editor, it was either Jim Daniel or Mort Schindel of Weston Woods. One or the other wrote a letter and said in that, "This is what the new *Forum* has done for Weston. It turns a discombobulated area into a town." I never forgot that. I thought that was a great thing.

**Arne:** The other thing I would characterize about *The Weston Forum* is that in many ways it seems like it was a voice for keeping Weston the way it was. Would you characterize it like that?

**Pat:** Well, it was the way it was at the time. Whatever it was like, that's what the paper reflected. The paper reflected everybody in town and what was going on. For instance, we did not ever print stories about people's parties unless everybody was invited and that kind of thing. The paper was literally the town's paper. It was everybody's. I felt like, which I was, I was the servant keeping it going. That was it.

**Arne:** You mentioned the changes in the town. Tell me a little bit about them.

**Pat:** Right. It was just starting to change. What was causing this change was the fact that corporations were all building new headquarters, because the laws had changed and they were getting good tax deductions and all for building headquarters. They were all building out in Westchester and Connecticut, and the families were moving in. So, all these families started moving in to Weston.

This was in the '60s and then the early '70s. That's when the companies were all turning over all the time. They don't do that anymore because it's too expensive. But that's what they were doing at the time. That's how Weston was built.

**Arne:** One more question about the editorial policy of the paper. As I mentioned, it really had a very strong editorial voice. Would you characterize it as being head cheerleader for the town, keeping a gimlet eye on government, ... challenging the status quo? Do any of these words ring a bell to you?

**Pat:** As I said, the paper became its own thing. The paper was its own thing and I was just the caretaker. Everybody else in town wrote something for the paper at some time. Every organization learned about publicity, which they never knew before because we never had a place to put it. They started to keep sending things in and we kept going printing and printing and printing.

We came out every single week -- every single week. One time there was a hurricane [*Hurricane Gloria, 1985* --ed.]. The hurricane came just the day before we went to press. We went to press on Tuesdays and that hurricane came on a Monday. Sure enough, that morning, my daughter and I went out with a Polaroid, right after the hurricane stopped. We took pictures all over. We were the only newspaper in the area that had hurricane pictures that day, because I took them right to press.

**Arne:** Then you had other people writing for the paper as well. You couldn't do this all by yourself.

**Pat:** No. Jane Smith came to *The Forum* almost immediately after it started. She had one baby and she ended up having all her babies while she was working on *The Forum*. She did P & Z and she became the expert in the Planning and Zoning Commission.

She would get called up all the time asking, "What about this? What about that?" She was the only one who knew everything about it -- after Bob Turner, of course. And every other Westonite who had a journalism background. [*Turner was head of the Planning and Zoning Commission. For details, see his 2015 Weston Voices oral history interview.* --ed.]

**Arne:** Other features of the paper included a series of resident profiles. Tell us a little bit about those resident profiles and how you developed them and who these people were.

**Pat:** One of the features we had in the paper was "Profile Weston." The first one was John Fanton because his ancestors had bought the property of what became Weston from the Indians. He was the first Profile Weston.

The second one was Judge Harlan because of course he was a Justice of the United States Supreme Court. I don't even remember whether we went on with that or didn't go on with that. Probably we had Bebe Waring in as well [*a Miss America in 1948 who with her husband Bayard opened the Spinning Wheel Restaurant on Black Rock Turnpike* --ed.].

We didn't run that all the time because we had always had a big space problem. The "New York Times" had a slogan, "All the News That's Fit to Print," and we had "All the News That Fits We Print."

**Arne:** Surely, over the years, you met a lot of characters in town. Reminisce a little bit about some of those people.

**Pat:** I'm bad at remembering names, but the one thing I do recall when you ask that question is that we used to have plays in Weston. I don't even remember the names of them, but we

were going to have the Weston Bicentennial and there was a man in Weston who was [a member] of one of the best-known groups who sang. He was Fred Hellerman of the Weavers.

And he probably still lives in Weston. I called him up and asked him if he would join in and he was very receptive and did a song for that play.

At the time that *The Forum* was developing [was also the time] when Weston was developing because it had just been a farm place but there were few farmers left because the land was bad. At this time Jim Daniel was [elected] a first selectman and he started different commissions and things in town which they never had before of course, [such as] the Historic District Commission, a lot of them. [*Jim Daniel was First Selectman from 1967-1969. -ed.*]

That [growth in town] started *The Forum*, really. It took a lot of space, but everybody had their news items in *The Forum*. Of course, everybody had to do their own articles and they'd bring them in and we would edit them.

**Arne:** As I mentioned, every town has its characters, with Weston having had its share. Do you remember anyone else who sticks out in your mind?

**Pat:** You mean as characters, good or bad? I got one. There was a woman in town. (As a matter of fact, she was the one who had named the "broomstick" skirt. I remembered it because we wore them in school. They were skirts that you would wash and then wrap around a broomstick to dry so you didn't have to iron them.)

Her husband was Chairman of the Board of Finance. She just took over everything. She would go into town offices and say, "I am Betty Fritz, the wife of chairman of the Board of Finance." She would write things constantly and bring them in. Beautifully typed, perfectly spelled, every word right, except none of them made any sense.

The blinking light near Cobbs Mill Inn [*At the intersection of Routes 57 & 53 -ed.*] got there because she one day was driving home and the sand in the road had caused a motorcyclist to fall down. She saw that. She wrote a letter, one of her letters, to the State and of course they couldn't make any sense of what it was. They didn't know what she wanted but they put up the blinker and it's still there.

She did some things that were very wrong and very dangerous to other people. Jim Daniel [*the First Selectman*] was very forward-thinking. He thought of a lot of things that the town should do. He had turned the dump into a landfill. It was the first one around the state. It was a very good thing and she got after him.

She was going to stop and get him, because she did not want the garbage trucks. She lived across the street from the place that's now called Lakeside area. That is where he found the gravel that we would need for having the landfill. [*He had wanted the town to buy the property but it did not happen. -ed.*] She didn't want garbage trucks across the street from her house that she really, really, really did rotten things.

**Arne:** Another interesting and memorable character?

**Pat:** Any other one? There are lots of people who are. Of course people who did great things. Like I think Fred Moore did great things for Weston. Oh, an interesting thing they had in Weston. They did not have women in any of the volunteer forces. Nor did we have a police department at the time, but we had marshals. [*The Police Department in Weston was created*

*in 1975. Before then there were constables in town and it was also patrolled by State Troopers, a few of whom lived in Town. -ed.]*

No women were ever, ever allowed to be in any one of these agencies -- the fire department, nobody.

The firemen used to have a stag dinner once a year and they would honor one of their firemen. One year they invited my husband. That was really, really close to the time I'd started *The Forum*. They invited my husband, so he went. He came home and I said, "What was that all about?" because this was a stag. He said, "Well, they were really honoring you." But they couldn't invite me because I was a woman. [laughs] Just amazing that they did that.

Anyhow, the interesting point is that's what they did and how they would honor one person. When we had a police department by then and the chief complained to me one day because they didn't have sergeants and things, he said he can't give anybody any kind of honors. I said, "Well, do what the fire department does."

So we planned this thing, and the only thing was to once a year have one policeman who would be honored the same way as the fire department. Interestingly, the first person who got appointed to that was Carl Filsinger, who is retiring this week. He was the first one who they honored that way.

Today everybody wonders how the Police Commission became the [agency that] chooses an outstanding Weston person every year. Nobody knows why. Well, that's why.

**Arne:** Before we go on [to other subjects], we should make note about Fred Moore because he was indeed important to the town. He started the EMS I think, but he was the civil-defense person and he...

**Pat:** The reason I thought he was great was because when we first came to town, they had [an open house]. I took my little two-year-old to sit in the fire engine. I asked the fireman there "How come every time a house caught on fire when I first moved here they would burn to the ground and now they never do?"

He said, "Oh, that's because of Fred Moore, who's now the fire chief. He goes to all these conventions, learns all this stuff, and comes back and teaches us."

One night I was at a Selectmen's meeting. I was the only one there, of course. There was Fred Moore on the agenda, and he was asking for a couple of hundred dollars to go to some convention. The Selectmen all said, "Oh, ho, ho, ho. Fred wants to go and have fun." They denied him. I was furious because I remembered this about my son. Anyway, I said to Fred when he came by me, "Fred, come tomorrow morning, and we will give you a check for that," which we did. That was how he ended up getting honored. [laughs]

**Arne:** Good for you. Let's move on a little to the controversies, the challenges that you witnessed over the years. Does one particular news item stick out in your mind, an event that *Forum* covered?

**Pat:** There were several things. .... One woman had written a letter to the editor, which was just heartbreaking about what had happened to her dog because we'd never heard of [dogs having heartworm]. We had a man hired in Weston who worked at the dump. This was when we had a dump. He used to bring in hunting dogs from the South all the time.

Sure enough, that's how this heartworm came to the whole Northeast in the United States. Meanwhile we had printed her letter, which was just heartbreaking. A new woman had just arrived in town who was interested in dogs, which I didn't know about. She called me up.

She asked ... to work on the paper. So we made her the dog editor...and every week she would call up all the vets around because it turned out that this heartworm was only contagious within a certain area. They had to be within a mile or something of the place.

She would go and ask all the veterinarians around how many dogs had them. We would print this column every week.

Then years later when she was doing a training thing for dogs, she asked me if I would come and take a picture one Saturday morning. I said, "Sure." So I went to take a picture. Here was this photographer she had hired from Wilton. He had this big camera on his shoulder. Every time I went to take a picture he would turn around so only this big camera was in the way. I could not get a picture of him, so I just took the picture of him [from the back] with the camera. That was that.

A few weeks later she called me up on a Sunday night all excited. She said, "You must turn on the television right away." I forget his name, but he had just been arrested [*i.e., the photographer who didn't want to be photographed --ed.*]. "Everybody knows. He's just been the second-highest communist spy ever in this country!" [laughs]

**Arne:** In Weston?

**Pat:** There he was. Yes. Well, he was living in Wilton, but he'd come on Saturday mornings to photograph her dog class.

The interesting thing was that, years later, my son was at Georgetown, and another kid from Weston was there. Sure enough, there was a course there in government. What their professor said was they had always caught, found out, every single spy ... except one.

Well, first of all they told me that somebody in Weston must be pushing drugs because the FBI had come, and they had come in to see her and told her that they were there looking around town. She said to me, "Why else would the FBI come here?" Of course, nobody knew about this at the time.

Then he just found this spy, and that was the end of Weston as far as the story went until my son was attending Georgetown University. His friend, who was taking [a government] course, [told my son that the] professor said, "Oh, there's one spy who we've never caught. [They] never found out what his connection was because everybody always had a connector where they would pass on the information."

He said it was some little town in Connecticut. This kid raised his hand and said, "I know where it was. I read about it in *The Weston Forum*." That's who it was. I think that was one of our best stories.

**Arne:** Over the last few decades there have been quite a few controversies that I can remember. You not only reported about them, but you spoke up at many public meetings. Tell us a few of those.

**Pat:** Well, [one was] when we were getting cable. We were very anxious to get cable television in because only people who were high up [on the hills] could get the three main stations from New York, and that was it. We were very anxious to get cable. There were a lot of things the town would get that the cable company was required to give to the towns when they came in.

One day there was a man in town who's still in town who was always making a deal for himself. Sure enough, lo and behold, there was a Selectmen's meeting, and I happened to be at that Selectmen's meeting because I would have to cover everything that somebody didn't cover.

There I was at the Selectmen's meeting, and this man was on the agenda. When he stood up to talk he introduced the man who he was with who was the manager of the new cable that was coming into the area.

He then said, "All we have to do to get cable in here right away is to give up all these things," namely the \$60,000 the schools were to get, all these different [goodies] that we were entitled to. He said if we would give all that up, why then this manager who was there will start to get cable in Weston right away.

So I raised my hand and I said, "That's outrageous. We need those deals. We need that money for Weston. There's no reason why we should give it up. If he could do it for money, he can do it. That should be that. Let him do it and be done with it."

This ... Weston person ... flung his finger out to me. He said, "She's in conflict of interest!" The First Selectman said, "Why is she in conflict of interest?" He said, "Because she has a newspaper." Well, that was just hilarious comparing me to the big cable company, my little newspaper. Anyway, we got the cable in as you know.

**Arne:** Another one that I remember personally very well is your opposition to [spending] \$85 million ... on building the three-four-five school. You were very outspoken about that [from the beginning of the planning in the early 1990s] [*The Town voted to approve the new school and it opened in 2004. -ed.*]

**Pat:** Oh, that was just before because of the fact that we knew there were two men running for First Selectman. One was [already] First Selectman but they were beating out each other in everything they could. Anyhow, they knew perfectly well that we were going to have a decline in school enrollment.

However, ... the one who was First Selectman at the time [*Bliss*], [sent out] a big paper to everybody saying, "Oh, we need this school because our school enrollment is going to go way up." So I called Hartford and called a guy who I had dealt with there, the enrollment person, and I asked what's the future for Weston's schools? "Oh," he said, "your enrollment is going to go way down."

Than I telephoned the guy [who was] running for First Selectman, [the one] who had sent out this big flyer. I said, "You know perfectly well that enrollment is going down." I said, "That's just a lie." He said, "Oh, nobody tells the truth." I said, "Well, I do." I tried to stop it [*by organizing a referendum -ed.*] but they sent out stuff and they got it through.

Now it sits there and we now have a well-reduced enrolment in Weston and extra school space the taxpayers are funding...

**Arne:** We've got the cable controversy and we've got the controversy over the schools. Any other one or two...

**Pat:** There are little things that people would call about because they knew that they would get a hearing. They would get a space in *The Forum*. They would be able to bring out their case.

One woman called up very unhappy because the man who was the head of the Historic District Commission had decided for some reason that he wanted to "get her." She owned a building lot that was on a hill. Just went practically straight down. There was no way you could build a colonial house on a lot like that. [*The building and renovation of houses in one of Weston's five designated Historic Districts must comply with regulations set forth the Connecticut State Statutes that are interpreted and administered locally by the Commission. – ed.*]

He wanted to put in his regulation [*that a house had to be a colonial.*] He boasted about it to me, which was a big mistake because now I knew. The woman called me up and she was just in tears and she came over. She was going to lose her building lot because [he was going to be] putting in this regulation that you could only build a colonial house in that district.

I printed her whole story with her quotes and everything in it. That was the end of that. He did not get away with it. People found the use of a newspaper and that they could use a newspaper. We always checked. We didn't let people get away with the wrong things.

**Arne:** Let me ask you a little bit about town government in the way the government was run from your perspective. [Have there been] any leaders of the town, important people in town that you felt really made a positive difference? Or people whom you felt frankly didn't do such a good job? How did the government of Weston evolve?

**Pat:** [First Selectman] Jim Daniel really did a very good job. He brought all kinds of commissions in and things that...

**Arne:** When was he a First Selectman? Do you remember?

**Pat:** I used to call him up and talk to him all the time about these different Commissions. Before I ever met him personally. It must've been about 1970. [*Mr. Daniel was First Selectman in the 1960s*]

Recently his daughter told me about a situation that we had a barbershop in the center in Weston. I had taken my little boy there, the first haircut. When we were new in town, the barber had talked to me, "Oh, you just moved to town," and all this.

He said that his son-in-law was a state trooper ... but he didn't tell me who it was and there was no news then or anything. [*Until 1956 the State troopers who patrolled Weston were stationed elsewhere. The Town established its own police department in July, 1975. –ed.*]

I told you about Betty Frist, who had decided that she was going to not allow a landfill to be the thing across from where she lived on Lakeside.

This barber, it turned out, told me that his son-in-law used to stop there all the time [because] this woman started the rumor that [he was participating in] a numbers game going in Weston

and that the one pushing it was Jim Daniel, which was most hilarious because he was an editor of the *Reader's Digest* and he was very reliable.

She then said that Jim Daniel was responsible for saying things about the local state trooper. Then I remembered about what had happened. Then I knew what the whole story was, but unfortunately I didn't have *The Forum* at the time so nobody ever knew. Jim resigned. He did not run again. He had done so much for the government and the town.

**Arne:** In general, do you think the selectman and the other boards have served the town well over the years? Do you remember a period [that was] particularly positive or not so positive?

**Pat:** Now, one person who did a lot for Weston was George Guidera [*First Selectman from 1987 – 1999. –ed.*]. Some people did not think he did, but he did. He did a lot for the town.

....

**Arne:** [Back to] the character of the town. Weston has been [called] by some people as rural and sophisticated, different names. How would you characterize the town? How would you characterize its change over these four or five decades?

**Pat:** “Keep Weston rural” is the thing that Ellen Strauss had started. Rural really doesn't mean that it was farmland and that everybody was a farmer. That was some technical term that was not for me, but she said that this is a technical term. Keep rural does not mean being a farm, but Weston fits that category.

**Arne:** Does it have to do with two-acre zoning?

**Pat:** Two-acre zoning had gone in, of course, which was interesting because there was no public water, no public sewer. Everybody had to have a septic tank. In fact, Jim Daniel once told me to watch out for Bridgeport Hydraulic Company because they were trying to come into Weston. If they came in and even if you had a well and they have their water pipe near your house, near your property, near your street, you would still have to pay for all the water that you were getting out of your own well because that was the law. He had fought very hard to keep Bridgeport Hydraulic out and it worked.

**Arne:** Another aspect character of the town is volunteerism, I think.

**Pat:** Very much.

**Arne:** Has that changed over the years?

**Pat:** Very much so. See, at the time, when *The Forum* started and when we were building the town it was what everybody was doing. Everybody contributed something to the town. It just felt that everybody was a volunteer and they were.

**Arne:** That still runs through today, don't you think?

**Pat:** I don't think so. I think it's only very partial. I think they have a lot of difficulty getting volunteers. You notice cars lined up after school where the mommies come to pick up their kids and take them, we never had that. We used to have the school buses, which you still have and are paying for nevertheless. But this is what they do. The mothers now either work or both work and spend a lot of time traveling their kids around which we never did.

**Arne:** Has the attitude towards the schools changed? Were people less conservative about education and they only became more concerned in the '60s or '70s? Is the attitude of the schools change over time?

**Pat:** We had very few schools. For instance, when we moved to Weston, as I say, the North House had burned down and that one class was in Westport. The high school was in Westport. There was a junior high in Weston and that was up to the seventh, eighth and ninth grade.

Then the 10th, 11th and 12th went to Staples in Westport. Then Westport said they were getting too crowded and we'd have to move out. Weston then had a choice. Weston was told to either build a high school or it could go into the Easton Redding School which was about to be built.

[In those days] we were told [by the State] that the school population would grow tremendously. That was because they did not know anything about the Nature Conservancy going to come in and they did not know that was going to happen.

All the land that is now the Nature Conservancy in Weston they figured without houses and without school kids on them. That's what they thought. Everybody thought, "Well, if we're going to have all these kids, we may as well have a high school," that we built a high school. [*Classes began in the new high school with the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades in 1968. –ed.*]

That's all there was. There was an elementary school then that junior high that was almost in there.

**Arne:** Talking about the Nature Conservancy reminds me about Devil's Den, Katharine Ordway. I don't know whether you knew her. The whole sense of respect for our environment, respective for our water resources and all of those things. How did that evolve over time?

**Pat:** Of course, Katharine Ordway bought the property in honor of her father. [He had started] the 3M Company. People didn't know that. All we knew is that there was a lot of land out there. That's about all. The only thing that we ever knew about was once when a man got lost up there, they had to call in the state dogs to find him. Everybody wondered, "Well, what was he doing up there? What was happening?" It turned out that he was angry at his wife. That's the one time we had the state dogs come in.

We just didn't know what was the significance of having all that land up there.

**Arne:** Has Weston done a good job protecting its resources?

**Pat:** I think very much so, except for one thing which Weston does not control: the Weston/Westport Health district, which was established by the State.

The problem there is that Weston still is under control of that Health District. What's happening in Weston, these great big houses, they were letting people put in two and three wells and the permits were being given by the Health District.

As far as I know, that's still happening today. That certainly is not an advantage for Weston and they can't control it unless we get out of the Health District.

**Arne:** Take a look in the crystal ball. Do you envision any significant changes that might occur in Weston, something about its character for example? [Once again there is] discussion about the shrinking of the Grand List, the raising of the taxes and how to make Weston more attractive. Perhaps even consider a bit more commercial development. Do you have any thoughts about that?

**Pat:** Of course, from the very beginning, everybody said, "Oh, if we had more stores and things like that, then our taxes would go down." We tested it in [a study by] the League of Women Voters. We did research and found out it just wasn't true because if you put in all of this commercial area, the building and all, you needed a paid fire department which is incredibly expensive .... There's all kinds of services [that would be needed]. You need sidewalks at certain places and all things that were very expensive that we didn't have to do. It wouldn't have helped at all, but people come up with that all the time.

If you watch carefully, looking at their names and look at who owns the property that they want to develop and you'll see there's a connection.

....

**Arne:** Let's talk a little bit about Pat Heifetz's legacy....Were they not in the room here, what would people say about you?

**Pat:** What would they say about me?

**Arne:** Yes.

**Pat:** I never asked. That's a good way to not find out.

**Arne:** Would people say you were blunt, outspoken, and skeptical? How might they characterize you from your point of view?

**Pat:** My point of view is that what they would be looking at would be *The Forum* and *The Forum* was itself and not me. I just took care of *The Forum*. That was all.

**Arne:** In addition to *The Forum*, what do you think your legacy will be in the town?

**Pat:** I don't know if I would have a legacy. Now, I don't think I know five people in Weston anymore because of the fact that people would know [one another for the whole time as their] children grew up.

Now there have been so many people moving in that school taxes have gotten so high that so many people said, "Well, when my kids are out of school, I'm out of here. I'm not paying these taxes for other people's kids." But of course we're paying for theirs.

However, ... I think that's going to change. [While] I don't know what's going to happen with the [new regional] planning agency [*The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG)*, which is comprised of 18 towns. In 2015 it replaced the Southwestern Regional Planning Agency, which had 8 member towns in Fairfield County and had been in existence for 50 years. -ed.] That will change things. The day will come when all the schools are under one control, [either] under the State or they'll have big school districts. I don't think our rural [character] can [continue to] go on in Weston for a long time.

**Arne:** People argue that such regional services will let our district save money.

**Pat:** It costs more when you get right down to it because we did all those studies and it always costs more, but they want to do that and a lot of people moving in and they think that this is the way to go. If they convince people, who knows? I think it would be too bad because I think home rule of course is the secret that keeps Weston the way it is.

**Arne:** Let's wrap this up by asking you what questions should I have asked you that I didn't ask you?

**Pat:** Listen, there are stacks of *Forums* that you could come and read. [But I remember] one time, after I had *The Forum* for a couple of years, the IRS called me in [and tried to tell me] that this was a hobby, because, in the first place, a woman owning a newspaper, that had to be a hobby.

They called me in. When I came in, I had all these framed boy scouts [citations] and all these different things. I filled up a bag with those things, with all the honors. Then I filled up a bag with newspapers and I went there. They showed me into the office and there was this guy on the telephone.

He pointed to a chair for me to sit down. I sat down and he's still on the phone and there I sat. I took my bags and went to his window and I put all these framed honors all around the windows and I took my stack of papers and I sat down and showed him that this was a real newspaper. It was not my hobby. Here where all these newspapers and he was supposed to call me back and let me know what happened. I never heard from them so I called up and they said, "Oh well, he seems to have resigned." That was the end of him.

**Arne:** Pat, thank so much for inviting us to talk with you this morning....

**Pat:** Thank you...