

# Henry Haynish

*This interview on March 23, 1982 is part of an Oral History of West Islip project sponsored by the West Islip Public Library. I am Ethel Morris of the library staff and I will interview Henry Haynish, who has lived in West Islip since 1913.*

*Mr. Haynish, where did your parents come from?*

My parents came from Austria.

*And why did they come to the United States?*

To find a better life.

*And what was your fathers' first occupation when you came here?*

A greens keeper on a south shore golf club.

*How many days a week did he work?*

Seven.

*And what was his salary?*

Dollar a day.

*Dollar a day, hmm. And then where did he work after that?*

Well after that he worked on an estate opposite the golf course which was called Turnbelts.

*Do you remember how Mr. Turnbelt made his money?*

I really don't know. But I know he had fifteen red setters.

*Did he work on another estate after that?*

After that he worked on the Davies Estate.

*Where was that?*

In West Islip, opposite where the library is now.

*And it started on Montauk Highway. How far back did it go?*

It went from Montauk Highway back to Magon Road.

*And about how many feet was it on Montauk Highway?*

It was about 300 feet on Montauk Highway and all the way back to Magon Road.

*So it went east to about which street would be there now?*

Well it's Shadybrook Lane I think it is now.

*From the gas station to a little past Shadybrook. And you visited the estate when you were growing up at all? Did you ever visit there?*

Well the Turnbelt estate I used to visit. Of course I had to help feed the dogs.

*The fifteen red setters?*

The fifteen red setters. And then on the Davies I used in the winter time take care of the furnace which was cold burning at that time.

*How did you take care of the furnace? What did you have to do?*



Shovel coal

*And when did you go there to do that?*  
Seven in the morning and seven at night.

*Before school?*  
Yeah.

*Cold winter mornings. Was it a long walk to the ...?*  
Well I had a bicycle.

*Who disciplined you when you were growing up?*  
My father with a big black leather harness strap.

*Why did you get punished?*  
Well mostly for playing hooky.

*Didn't like school that much right? Do you remember anything about your teachers or your principal or anything?*  
Well our principle was Mrs. Kellum. Big red head. And she was very tough. Her office was in the library and she had a desk in the middle of the library and her weapon was a big whip which she could reach any corner of that room and you really got it.

*Where did she get the whip?*  
Who knows. Haha.

*What did you get punished for?*  
Well throwing spit balls, talking, and bringing mice into class...

*Bringing mice into class?*  
Yeah, yeah. We trapped the mice and used to tie a string to their tail and used to let them run up and down the classroom. And our teacher at that time was Miss Smith. She was a skinny spinster. And as soon as she seen the mice she would yell out, "Somebody go and get Markham's cat!"

*Markham's cat. Is that someone who lived near the school? Markham?*  
Yeah, next door.

*And they had a cat. Who was kept busy. The winters were long and there was no television in those days. How did you spend the long evenings?*  
Well reading and listening to phonograph records. They were wind up phonographs.

*Going to bed early I guess huh?*  
Yeah.

*What do you remember about the Long Island Rail Road.*  
Well, we lived on John Street opposite where the Moose Hall is now. And our backyard butted onto the railroad. Also the railroad yards were in back of us there and when steam engines came in with their cars, they disconnect the locomotive and put it over a pit and clean out the not the furnace or whatever that coal supply was and shake the ashes out of it.

*Into this pit?*

Into this pit. And then they would move the engine and they would take the ashes out of the pit and dump them out toward a swamp that was over there. And when we were kids we would get up early in the morning with a burlap bag and go out there and pick out the coke out of these ashes that they left there.

*Pieces of coke?*

I mean coke comes from soft coal. And then later on ...

*What did you do with the pieces of coke?*

Well we heated the house and then..

*So your family never had to buy any fuel?*

Well, later on after they electrified it. Haha.

*Any other way you got pieces of coke?*

We got coal, soft coal, that was thrown from the engine and we knew the fireman. He'd see us standing along there. And then he'd throw out coal or coke, whatever the hell it is.

And we also used to go along the railroad and scavenge whatever coal dropped off of these hard coal trains because over where Keith Lane is now, there was a railroad siding and they used to have these coal cars come in there and all of the states along the line they would go with a horse and wagon and load this coal on. And then what was left, I mean there was always some on the ground, we would pick that up and carry it home. Haha.

*So at least your fuel bill was a lot cheaper.*

There was no fuel to pay for in those days. It's so different now.

*Was crime a big factor when you were growing up in West Islip.*

We hardly had any crime at all.

*Never had to lock your doors?*

Never locked the door. Leave em' wide open.

*What was the attitude about young people going into the armed forces during World War II?*

Well, seeing that they were patriotic and that they had a cause to fight for. Not like Vietnam and things like that.

*You were very young when World War I ended. Do you remember anything about ...*

The only thing I remember is the cheering and the whistles.

*What was the attitude of your father? He served in the army in Austria. What was his attitude do you think about serving in the army.*

It was conscription you might as well say. There was a law that when you reached a certain age, you had to go. I don't know how many years, I think they put in one year or three I don't remember.

*So how was life different then in the 1920's and 1930's in West Islip.*

Nice and slow! No rush no mush. Haha.

*Not too much traffic I guess.*

Not too much traffic. Their weren't too many cars around.

*Do you remember when you got your first car?*

Yeah I was about seventeen.

*What kind was it?*

A Tin Lizzy. You know what a Tin Lizzy is?

*Yup, Ford. Well, can you describe it?*

Yeah it was a touring car. After the first year or so the top blew off. You didn't have any top.

*It was a cloth?*

Cloth top. Hahaha.

*Did you have to crank it up to start it?*

You had to crank it.

*How fast did it go?*

Well if you're going over forty miles an hour your speeding.

*Hahaha. You didn't worry about a speeding ticket. What was your occupation?*

I was the parts manager in a automobile dealers.

*For how many years?*

From 1933 till 1971.

*You saw a lot of changes.*

Oh yeah. Yeah.

*If you had to live your life over again, would you choose to live it in West Islip?*

Part of it. Haha.

*Up until when?*

Up until the fifties.

*Early fifties?*

Yeah. Yep.

*Why?*

Well it changed drastically after that. It got overpopulated, you know. Like when we were kids there was woods all around. You could go through the woods, pick berries, go down by the meadows by the bay and go fishing, crabbing, and clamming and all that but now you can't even get there. Everything is blocked off. Development, too much development.

*Well, Mr. Haynish, I want to thank you very much!*

Well, that's okay!