

Interviewer: Nicole Morin-Scribner (NMS)

Interviewee: Theodore (Ted) Truman (TT) and Milton Truman (MT)

Date: Thursday, October 14, 2021

Place: Truman residence, Scarborough Maine

Transcriber: Nicole Morin-Scribner

NMS: My name is Nicole Morin-Scribner. I am a volunteer with the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center. Today is Thursday, October 14th, 2021. Today I have the honor of interviewing Theodore Truman, but do you prefer to go by Ted?

TT: Ted

NMS: OK. I have the honor of interviewing Ted Truman. We are interviewing him in his home here in Scarborough. Also present with us is his nephew, Milton Truman. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today.

I usually like to start these interviews right at the beginning and ask you where and what year were you born?

TT: I was born in 1929. December 11th, 1929. I'm the first American in the family. His (Milton's) father, my brother Paul, was born in Constantinople. Now it's called Istanbul. My father decided to come to America to seek his fortune. He came to America and while he was gone, the atrocities were going on. The first Holocaust was 3 million Armenians were slaughtered by the Turkish people. Why they picked on Armenians, I still don't know. They also picked on Jewish people

and Greek people. I guess they were the ones that owned the businesses. The Turks were the ones to sweep the streets and servants and whatever. I guess they got fed up and said all of these foreigners own everything. So, they decided to have a Holocaust. When my father heard about it, his father, Paul, was just a young boy. He came back to Turkey and took his father, Paul, and my mother and they fled and went to Athens, Greece. Shortly after, my brother Jim was born there. Then my brother, Plato. They named him right. Plato was born there. So, the 3 brothers were there. My mother was pregnant when my father decided to come to America with his pregnant wife and 3 children. I was born maybe 5 or 6 months after they arrived. So, whenever I got mad at my brothers, I would say, "You bunch of foreigners. Go back to where you came from." I made it by about 5 months. Then after came 3 girls. So, there are 4 boys in a row and 3 girls in a row. He died when he was about 53 years old. Sad, but he died. He didn't take care of himself.

My uncle Louis, who was his partner and my uncle sort of took over the family. We lived upstairs of the store. In fact, Milton, do you have the picture of the building? They owned the Puritan Tea Room in Biddeford [note: They actually owned the Puritan Confectionery which they later sold to Milton Mouzas as the Puritan Tea Room], right on the corner [note: of Main and Alfred Street]. In the back of it...you know I can talk until the cows come home.

MT: Yes. She only asked you what your date of birth (laughter)

TT: I know. See what happens when you get me started?

MT: That's ok. Alright.

TT: In the back of the Puritan was a little balcony with a player piano. They used to start the piano. They decided to move up the street and they bought a two-tenement building, the biggest project of its time in Biddeford. They jacked the whole building up and put the stores downstairs and a cellar which eventually became a bowling alley.

He died when he was 53. My uncle, his brother/partner died 4 years later at 53. They were 4 years apart in age and they both died.

It goes on from there. We moved to Birch Street, where Milton still lives. They finally moved us out of the store in 1941. That's where we lived for years. So that's a start.

NMS: One of the things that I wanted to ask you is I know that you identify as Greek, but your parents were both born in Turkey.

TT: They were Greeks, Armenians and Jewish people that owned all of the businesses in the area. They were not Turks but spoke the language.

NMS: So, they were Greeks, but they lived in Turkey.

TT: Constantine the Great came and conquered all of the islands. Some of the soldiers, some of the people stayed and lived in Turkey. They were Greek

Orthodox. [note: Millions of Greeks have been living in what is now Turkey continuously since the middle 2nd millennium BC. The freedom to practice their culture and religion varied throughout history based on who was in power.]

NMS: I understand. Going from there to Greece to Biddeford, Maine? Why Biddeford?

TT: Why do most of them go? My uncle and my father spoke 5 languages: Greek, Armenian, Turkish and so forth. I think what happens with most of the so-called foreigners is they don't speak... (my mother went to French school). They spoke all of the languages but not English or American. The reason he went to Biddeford, and this happens a lot I believe, is they know someone. It could be a cousin or a friend, who can put them up. Where are they going to go? They don't even know how to go look for a room. So, they put them up and they stay with them. That's why they came to Biddeford. Because he had friends, relatives or someone and they gave him a room where he could live.

MT: Pretty much what happened also at that time period when the Italians, the Greeks and the Armenians and so forth were migrating to get to this country. They were looking to work. They were young men looking to work. At the time, the big area to go to actually was Lowell, Haverhill, Lawrence were the areas. The other part was Rochester, New York. All of the mills were there. But my grandparents were told, "Don't go there. The jobs are in this other town that they knew that people talked about was in Biddeford. So, those guys headed this way because

they were looking to work in the mills. That's how they got their start, working in the mills.

NMS: What did your parents do for work when they were still overseas?

TT: They were merchants, but I really don't know...

MT: No. My grandfather and grand uncle, when they came here, were only like 17 years old. They went from there, where there was no opportunity, to come here to work in the mills.

TT: That was a great opportunity, they thought. [note: the brothers lived on a third floor cold flat by the river on Water Street in Biddeford where the park is today.]

MT: Then, working in the mills, his father and his uncle had a milk business. They delivered milk around the town. They had a little district they would take care of. From there, they started their first market on Foss Street. So, they went into the grocery business.

MT: First, it was on Foss Street. The building is gone now. It's just a parking lot next to Grady's. That was the first store. Then they expanded after that. Like the Puritan. Like my uncle was just saying, that was his grandfather's place. It was called Puritan Confectionary. It wasn't Puritan Tea Room yet. He sold it to Milton Mouzas. Milton Mouzas took over and that's where my uncle was talking about

the piano playing up in the back. Then it was candy and ice cream. The floors, to this day, are the floors that his father and uncle installed which were imported from Italy.

TT: They were tiles. Beautiful floors.

MT: There are just few places left in Biddeford that still have that tile. The biggest one was to put in Throumoulos Market on the corner of Alfred and Pool Street.

NMS: Before we leave that, those floors you are talking about, what would be the business today that where you could go and see those floors.

MT: The first one that is gone completely was of course Throumoulos Market. The other one was the Puritan Building itself which is now the Chinese place?

NMS: Happy Dragon?

MT: Happy Dragon. As you first walk in, the tiles are still there.

TT: Same tiles. Exactly.

MT: In the St. John's Building, for some reason they purchased some of the same tiles but it's in a little, it used to be a barber shop, where St. John's is. I believe the floor is still there. There's one more on Alfred Street. It used to be Yvonne and

Juliette's [note: gift shop]. The floor was also installed there. It was very beautiful tile.

TT: It was gorgeous. Small tiles. Beautiful.

NMS: Now, your father before he came to Maine, had been working. He had a couple of children.

MT: No. He didn't have his children. He married my grandmother in 1920. So he was already here working. He was almost twice the age of my grandmother. He was in the United States in 1909.

NMS: I thought his father, your grandfather came to the United States when Plato was already born.

TT: Plato was born in Greece. Milton's father was the only one born in Turkey.

MT: In 1920-1921, there was something called the Great Catastrophe [aka Greek genocide]. It's in all of the history books. They made a deal with the Greeks, Turks and Armenians that they had to leave Turkey, or they were going to be in big trouble. So, they made an exchange in 1920 and 1921. The Greeks would leave and the Turks that were there would take control. But the Turks elsewhere had to come back. It was like an exchange. It didn't work out that great. The loss of life

of the Armenians and the Greeks and the others were worse than even the Holocaust of what the Jews experienced.

TT: The first one was they supposedly slaughtered 3 million Armenians.

MT: They did. It was horrible. But you don't read about it. [note: many other nationalities were affected also, especially Greeks.]

TT: I don't know why they picked on the Armenians. [note: especially during times of war.]

MT: The Armenians defended the border the Ottoman Empire was coming in to, which our family also was from.

TT: Ok. That's right.

MT: My family was from the higher mountains which they went to Trabzon then Istanbul eventually. My family was from the higher mountains, which they went to Trabzon then Istanbul eventually. They were in a place called Gümüşhane which in Greek was called Agriopoulos. It was like the capital of the area. They migrated to Ordu and then to Constantinople. My grandfather goes back to marry my grandmother. He has his first child in 1921. After that, my grandmother and my father went to Athens. My grandfather brought them there. That's how the rotation started. Then, my uncle Jimmy was born in Athens along with my uncle Plato. Shortly after, she gets pregnant with this guy but gets born in this country.

So, he's first generation as I'm first generation because my father was born there, right?

TT: Right

NMS: I wondered when they were even in Greece. I'm trying to see what they did for work in Greece.

MT: I'd say they worked in mines or as merchants. There were just kids, so they didn't have a real job at 16 and 17. [note: perhaps traveling merchants]

TT: They were young.

MT: The age difference between his father and the next one was 4-5 years. My grandfather was the oldest one. But, there are a lot more in this family who didn't make it.

NMS: That was another question that I was going to ask. As you were growing up did you keep in contact with people in Greece? Did you keep the connection?

TT: We had relatives there.

As a matter of fact, that's another story. My mother got this letter. Oh, before my father left with my mother and his father to come to America, they bought a small lot. It was just a little house lot.

MT: His plan was he went and bought that lot in Athens. Remember now, they are going from Turkey to Athens. He was hoping he would eventually come back.

TT: Yes. When his children were old enough, he thought he'd come back with my mother and live happily ever after. But my mother now has a washing machine. She has this, she has that, and her children were now Americans, most of them. She's not going back to Greece.

Time went on and my mother got this letter from a man who was an architect/builder and he wanted to build a small condo there. Plato being Plato said, "Wait a minute. I was born there. I've never been there." He went over and met with this guy. He said, "You know, I've got brothers and sisters. I have to talk with them." The guy said, "Look, I've got 1-2 weeks to get my papers in. I can't fool around. I'll tell you what I'll do. I want to build 6 apartments. Two penthouse apartments, I'll give your family." That's how for years we went back, we all did. His father, I did with my wife, and we'd go back for like 6 weeks and spend them in Athens.

NMS: That worked out pretty good.

TT: Yeah

NMS: Tell me about what it was like growing up in Biddeford. What was your childhood like?

TT: Work. I used to go to the store. I went to Biddeford High School but at recess time I used to come and take all the cans. I'm a precision kind of guy.

MT: Fanatic.

TT: A fanatic actually.

MT: The store he's talking about now is originally Throumoulos Market that became T Brothers Market which eventually you might have remembered as T Sisters Market.

TT: My sisters took it over.

MT: Which is where Northeast Bank is, on that corner. That whole section there.

TT: I would go in and move all the cans. They were half filled, the shelves. I'd move everything up and turn all the labels, so they were showing. When you came in, it looked like we had just opened the store up. On Saturday I used to have to come, and my father saw the war coming and he bought feta cheese in small little barrels. My job was to roll the barrels every week. All kinds of little things.

NMS: How old were you when you started working at the store?

MT: They were probably working in that store by 7 or 6. They were in there because they lived upstairs.

TT: We lived right upstairs in the corner. [note: it wasn't until my father died that my Uncle Louis moved us to Birch Street.]

MT: There were 7 kids and my grandparents in a two-bedroom flat place. A lot of immigrants did that. They worked downstairs and lived upstairs. From little kids, they were in that store.

TT: The kids all went to school, and I stayed with my mother. I couldn't speak English. So, I did things. My mother was an exceptionally clean person. I learned from her. If this is not straight, I'm going to turn it. Everything has to be a certain way. That helped me when I went to Maine Maritime Academy. I went to sea for 10 years. I've been around the world completely 10 times. I've been to the North Pole, the South Pole. I've been through the Corinth Canal [note: in Greece]. I've been through every canal in the world. I learned from my mother and working with my brothers. We were workers. It was nothing to work all day long from 7 in the morning to midnight.

MT: They were importers of fine foods from all over.

TT: One that was a very fancy store was S.S. Pierce in Boston. They had different labels: red label, blue label. Red was the best then blue. We had the agency for

S.S. Pierce. People from Kennebunkport, very wealthy like the Bushes, would come there and buy because we had started the franchise for it.

NMS: How did you learn to speak English?

TT: That's a good question. I went to school. I stayed back the first year. I couldn't speak. I couldn't keep up with it. Eventually, all of my friends went to second grade, and they stayed back. I caught up with them. From one thing to another like working in the store, behind the counter and listening to the people talking, I learned.

NMS: In the Biddeford area, especially during those days, there was more than one nationality.

TT: Probably 75% were French Canadians. They came down looking for work. They migrated down in Lewiston and Biddeford. They only got paid, I remember, we cashed their checks on Friday. The checks were about \$15-16, and they had 4-5 children. But they were always clean and well mannered. It was a French town. There were a few Polish people, a few Jewish people and some Greek/Turkish people (mostly Greek).

MT: As you know, it was quite a mixed bag. Albanians...and those groups for the most part, not for protection from the other groups, would band together. If you were Orthodox, whether you were Armenian Orthodox or any type of Orthodox, you were part of the Greek Orthodox. They all had a Greek church.

TT: On Emery Street.

MT: On Emery Street in 1919. That was established in 1919. That neighborhood, Emery Street, was like Greek town and Italian town and Jewish. Because they had some of the same foods that they ate. They sort of stuck together. When he was in high school and even when I was in high school, it was the same way. Yes, you made friends with others too, but you tend to stay with your own.

TT: We were foreigners.

MT: We were foreigners in their town because they dominated the town. As they dominated in politics too.

NMS: With regards to your culture, your language, your traditions what are some that really stick with you?

MT: Tell them about the bakery.

TT: Next to the Throumoulos Market, was Robichaud's Bakery. It was a French bakery. I was closed on Sundays. Now I don't know if you know, the Greek holiday that is the biggest of all. It is bigger than Christmas.

MT: It is Easter.

TT: My father and my uncle had keys to the store next door. They had permission to go to that bakery. They had ovens, like pizza ovens and baking ovens. Lamb was the big meal. My father and my uncle would take orders for whole baby lamb or a half lamb or four quarter, lamb head, lamb brains (that was a delicacy with scrambled eggs.) They would give my father and my uncle the order. They would go to the church and come back. My father and uncle would go in at 2 o'clock in the morning and start baking all the lambs. They would buy spring lambs, nice little baby lambs, very tender and they would cook it all. So, the Greek people when they got out of church would come over. They would wrap the lamb in white meat paper.

Also, Rice's Bakery, a Jewish bakery would deliver bulky rolls in these big bags. They were delicious. They'd be fresh in the morning. The Italian bread, they never delivered anywhere else, but they had to deliver seven days a week. The store only closed twice in 50 years. Twice, when my father died and four years later when my uncle died. In 50 years, it was closed only two days.

MT: Of course, one story leads to another. Everybody in town and you know Georges Italian. George Ladakakos actually got his start with these guys.

TT: He got out of the service and was looking for work. We hired him. We were making them with bulky rolls, the nice Jewish fresh rolls that they brought every day. We made a small Italian sandwich on a bulky roll. Well George came in. He was a very good worker.

MT: Wonderful man.

TT: Wonderful man. He came to us one day and he said, “You know, I love working for you boys and you treat me well.” He was making the sandwiches out in on the long counter. Back there was an ice box, not a refrigerator. The man would come in with a big block of ice and put it in the middle and it was open. They kept all of the meats and whatever you had in there cold. George was doing that. Wonderful guy. One day he came up to us and said, “You know Ted and Plato, I enjoy working for you. You treat me and pay me as well as you can. But, I’d like to go in business for myself.” We had another building going up on Pool Street. There was a Jewish man named Neiman who slaughtered animals (he was a butcher). He had just moved out. George said, “I know you have an open store there. I’d like to rent it from you.” We said, “Yeah.” Normally, we’d say, “He’s going to go make sandwiches and compete with us?” We said, “Go ahead.” In fact, we had a little sign at the counter that mentioned if you wanted a long sandwich go around the corner to George’s. That’s where George first started. I told that to family one day a few years ago. That’s where Georges sandwich first started, then they moved to Jefferson Street where they are now.

NMS: So, you helped him start that.

TT: That’s where Georges started.

Another thing, my father had passed away, my uncle saw the war coming. He was the buyer. He would go to Europe and buy products from all over Europe. I

remember him buying 50 cases of Norwegian sardines and feta cheese. He bought stuff that lasted through the whole war. What he did is, if someone would come in and say, "Do you have this or that?" We'd have it in the back storeroom. If he was a good customer, he'd call me over and say, "Go get this. Put it in a brown bag and bring it over." The good customers got whatever we had that you couldn't get anywhere. The war had come now. There were none of the European foods available. We had them in the back room.

MT: These guys were smart guys. They were very diversified in the products they had to sell. Not only did they take care of those people who were immigrants from those particular countries that we've mentioned, like their Italian foods, everything they were importing in. But families, like he mentioned George Walker, who is George Bush's grandfather, would come into the store because they had caviar and they had stuff that you couldn't get anywhere because the uncle was always thinking ahead. He would go to Europe and buy all of these things. They always had these big varieties of stuff.

TT: Practically all the years of the war, we had product that nobody in America had. The Bushes and the very wealthy [note: during the war years, it was actually the Walker family from Kennebunkport as well as the famous author, Kenneth Roberts] would come down with their chauffeur. The chauffeur would open the door and they'd stand by the door waiting for their boss or whatever you want to call them. Then, we had the S.S. Pierce line, which was the cream of the crop. That's where a lot of it started.

NMS: What was the impact on you? Do you remember during the Depression? You lived through part of that. What do you remember from that?

MT: Well, he was little.

TT: I was small. I swept the street, the sidewalk. A lot of farmers sold us fresh corn. We had watermelons outside on a little stand. We got to be sort of experts on... They'd come up and say, "Ted or Paul, would you pick me out a good watermelon?" We knew how to go and tap it. If it was real hollow, that was a good one. The heavier one, the better. They relied on us to go out and pick out stuff.

MT: During this period, during the Depression and Prohibition, these guys were creative all the time. They weren't the only ones doing it. My grandfather would have watermelon over here: beautiful, sliced fresh watermelon that would be 5 cents. But he'd also have watermelon over there, for 25 cents a slice. You ask why the difference? This one would be full of vodka (laughter). They made their own stuff back then. They got by. They had those skills, or someone taught them how to do those things.

TT: They were hard workers.

MT: They worked themselves to death.

TT: They died four years apart, both at the age of 53. It was sad, but they were very hard workers. They all spoke 5 languages: Jewish, Greek, Polish, French. I can hardly speak English. They all the languages so whenever an ethnic person would come in, they felt, “He’s paying attention to me. How does he know all of those languages?”

MT: But it wasn’t always rosy.

TT: No. It wasn’t always rosy.

NMS: You said your father died young.

TT: Yes. 53 years old. [note: he was obese and smoked]

MT: He smoked, he smoked all the time

TT: They all smoked.

MT: He was a 300-pound guy. They just worked, ate and slept.

TT: That’s all they did.

MT: All 3 brothers, the oldest was Peter then Louis or Lazaros and the 3rd one was Christos. Chris was the younger guy. They all died at about the same age.

TT: They didn't take care of themselves.

MT: They just worked all of the time.

TT: They all smoked in those days. We sold a lot of Checkerberry snuff. We sold a lot of Bromo Seltzer. They got upset stomachs, would come in with soda water and stir it up.

MT: Here's an example. This was the store, and they had a big ice cream sundae thing. They have everything in that store.

TT: His father [Note: Paul Truman] actually ran that for quite a few years.

MT: My father was a little bit on the wilder side of the group. He was much older than the rest of them.

TT: And he was handsome. He had all of the good-looking women.

MT: He is, by the way, the Truman Driving School guy (laughter).

TT: Did you know about the Truman Driving School?

MT: Yeah. She knows.

TT: I tell more people about my brother, Paul. He bought this 5-acre lot and then I thought he was crazy. He built his home there. He had a very good builder build it. He had the school built with all glass so that if you drove by you could see all of the students up there. I always say my brother was so smart. He developed a whole thing: stop signs, curbs, the whole property. You had to pass his test there before he let you drive on the highway. When you got on the highway, it was a piece of cake. "I do this all the time at Truman's School."

MT: My father was in Pearl Harbor. He was young. He was in the Philippines.

TT: You know I think of Pearl Harbor. Can I just interrupt?

MT: Yeah

TT: You know the war broke out so 2-3 of the boys were going to go sign up. They want to go to Hawaii... the hula, hula girls.

MT: Boy, they were surprised.

TT: They chickened out but my brother Paul. He was sent to Hawaii. There's a reporter, Ted Dyer, told the Believe it or Not man (Ripley's). Believe it or not by Ripley. They interviewed Paul. He was on Believe it or Not by Ripley [note: Polycarvos Thronumouloupoulos] the longest name in the US Army. He started getting letters from girls everywhere. They wanted to marry him. It had a picture of him. He was a very handsome guy. That school, I've told more people how

unique it was. I don't know of any driving school that has that same concept. He had a lot of flair.

He loved automobiles. He had the franchise (it wasn't much) for Tucker automobiles. That's the one that when you went around the corner, in the center, there was a light that went around the corner.

MT: The lights would turn in with it.

TT: It was automatic. There were no automatic cars back then. This had everything.

MT: He wanted to do things different than these guys. These guys stayed in the store and did very well. My father was more into cars, he had an automobile called the Playboy. (laughter) Anyways, you're just a little girl, Nicole. You wouldn't know those things. He branched and did different things. These guys stuck together.

TT: Yeah. The 3 brothers stuck together.

MT: The difference that my uncle Ted was allowed, they wanted him to have a better education.

TT: I was the first one to go to higher education.

MT: He went to Maine Maritime. He was in the Navy. That's stuff you can tell them about. He got a full education and they made sure that he was going to stay there and get what he needed.

NMS: I do want to go there but I did want to ask, because you brought up Paul and he was at Pearl Harbor.

TT: Yeah. When they bombed Pearl Harbor.

NMS: Do you remember how the family felt when you heard about that?

TT: Yeah. Oh yeah. We were sitting by the radio. You had these little two way or whatever it was, and they listed the dead. They bombed Pearl Harbor, I mean they really bombed Pearl Harbor and we didn't know if he survived or not for days or weeks. We didn't know whether my brother Paul, his father, survived it. He did. From there, after being there, they sent him to the Solomon Islands. He was there and got malaria there. I remember when he came home, and I saw him sitting there and he was shaking. Oh God, it was a terrible sight. My oldest brother was my idol.

MT: He had that the rest of his life. He'd have those shakes. It was frightening. But then they sent him to Germany. I mean, give the guy a break.

TT: I mean, some never left the United States. Give him a break. They sent him to Germany. My God, this guy's been all over the place and survived.

MT: He was in the thick of it. Then he finally ended up in France at the end of the war.

NMS: In those days, how did you stay in contact with him.

TT: We really didn't. I don't think we did.

MT: A letter here and there to his mother saying, "I'm OK." They all did that.

TT: Communication between families wasn't that easy back in those days.

MT: I think you have an interesting story about the Andrea Doria [note: Italian ocean liner known for its sinking in 1956, where of the 1,706 passengers and crew, 1,660 were rescued, while 46 lost their lives.]

TT: I worked first for [note: Aristotle] Onassis. He was the richest man in the world. He's the one that married Jackie Kennedy. Most of the merchant ships were built by the government. The war came and they built all of these ships. Now that you're done with them, the government didn't want them back. What would they do with all of these ships? So, different companies bought them for \$500,000 which is nothing. Onassis was the richest man in the world by far. He was the biggest ship owner. He had 350 ships. My first job at Maine Maritime...they placed 98% of all the graduating cadets. You can go to Harvard, here and there and your parents pay hundreds of thousands of dollars. You come

out and say, “What do I do now?” You don’t have a job. At Maine Maritime, they placed 98%. They have a job for you. I didn’t know. Onassis? Who is he? They flew me down to Norfolk, Virginia. There must have been 200 ships out there that didn’t have crews. So, I went aboard. The ships were waiting to get crews to get going. They had a cargo in there but no crew. I came over. I got there at 3 o’clock in the morning. I said my name. It was Throumoulos then. We had shortened it from Thronumouloupoulos to Throumoulos. I was the first one to change it to Truman, but that’s another story. I might get there, I don’t know.

MT: The name was Thronumouloupoulos and then Throumoulos.

TT: My father wanted to be Americanized so he cut off the polis. Now it’s Throumoulos. He’s an American now, you see.

When I went aboard and I said, “Lieutenant Throumoulos”. He said, “What?” I said, “Throumoulos”. He said, “OK, Smitty. Follow me.” They called me Smitty all the time I was on that ship.

I worked for Onassis. What an experience. I tell you; I was so lucky. I’ve been all over the world. I’ve done all these things as a young man, traveling, meeting different people aboard ship here, there and everywhere. I got an education that 10 young men will never, ever have. That’s why I said I could tell you stories until the cows come home and that’s true.

NMS: Why did you pick going to Maine Maritime after high school?

TT: I was graduating. This coach, Coach Kinney, he was originally an Old Orchard Beach fella. He was a coach up there. Three or four of us made All State football. He came down to interview us to recruit us to go to Maine Maritime. I said, "Maine Maritime?" He said, "Yeah. We pay you \$65 a month and clothing." I said, "\$65 a month."

MT: They paid you to go there.

TT: They paid you to go to school.

MT: \$65 a month was a lot of money (laughter).

TT: That is all the money in the world. I never had \$5. To get \$65.

MT: (Laughter) Yeah. You didn't get paid much. But they ate. And a roof over their heads.

TT: I didn't have a car. Weekends, I would stay in Castine and walk the town. At least I got a good meal. I was brought up as a military man, sort of. Then I went to Victory Carriers was the name. He bought 20 ships. Those were fast steam ships. Most of the ships were the old, up and down. They went maybe 15 miles an hour, where the Victory ships went over 20. Those were beautiful ships. But the government didn't want the ships back. That why they sold them to these owners

and Onassis bought a lot of them for a few million dollars and he became the richest ship owner and man in the world at that time. That was before Jackie.

NMS: You were an engineer on those ships?

TT: Yeah. Why did I become an engineer? I used to sell bananas and apples on Alfred Street. What do I know about engineering? All the football players and regular guys, I thought, were all engineers. On senior year, we made out what we wanted to do. You took half a year of deck and half a year of engineering. Either you were down in the engine room or up on deck. My ranks for engineering, I didn't know anything about engineering. They called me in and (I can't remember his name) said, "You do very well with math. But your marks, I don't think you can make it." I said, "Oh no. I'm going to study hard. (pounding fist on table)". Only because I wanted to be with the boys, the football players. I went out and stuck with it and did all right.

MT: His class was around the time of Nick Poli, from Poli's Market. Art Descoteaux was a little younger than him. He was part of that group. Lloyd LaFontaine who was a year behind him. That was that period. Nathanson was a little bit older. Those are the names that would be familiar to people still in town.

TT: Yeah. Back to high school. Biddeford hadn't beaten Thornton in 33 years. Our senior year, there were 9 seniors and 9 games. The coach allowed each senior to be the captain on the field. We beat them 33 to nothing. It was unheard of. We had quite a football team. For 3 years, we were undefeated at Biddeford.

MT: That was Coach Kinney.

NMS: After you graduated from Maine Maritime...

TT: I went right to work for Onassis. I went on board the ship that was waiting for a crew. We sailed right away. They were loading coal because in Europe, all the factories were bombed out. So, they didn't have any material. They were looking for this fine coal so they could blast it into furnaces like oil. That's what we were carrying. Wherever the money was, that's where Onassis sent us. He sent us to the Far East. He sent us all over the world. We'd go over when the ship was full. It was down low, and it was riding good. But coming back, there was nothing. So, we are bouncing all over. We came out of the canal and all of a sudden, the captain started to go due South because there was a big, big storm. He thought he'd go south to get away from the bad storm and then come around from the Carolinas and come along the coast. The Andrea Doria was the pride of the Italian fleet. It was SOS, SOS. We are sinking. We need help. That Andrea Doria was their pride. They had all these paintings, these famous Italian paintings. We wanted to help but we were trying to save ourselves. We went like 300-400 miles due south and then turned around and came up. We always went over with a full load and came back empty. Boy, I've been bounced around a long time and many times I didn't think I'd make it.

MT: The point is, as you know, the Andrea Doria sank. A lot of people died. But, there's no way that that ship could have gone back to help because they would have perished in the storm. They lost a lot of people, right off the Carolinas.

TT: That was a tragedy.

NMS: That must have been a bit of a bit of a transition as you said selling bananas at the corner store to traveling the world.

TT: Yes. Traveling all over the world.

NMS: What was that transition like? How did you adjust?

TT: I was a very...

MT: You were broadminded. (laughing)

TT: What do I want to say. I was a fanatic about cleanliness and what I do. Like I say, my wife will put something there and when she's not looking, I'll make it straight. Everything has to be in order. That's what I used to do. I learned in the grocery store, come over, bring all of the cans forward and turn them so the label is in front.

MT: He took his military experience and brought it to Cascades. The kitchen was like you were coming on to a ship. The captain was on the ship. It was super

clean. You could eat off the floor. All his experience from the grocery store to the military to the merchant marines transitioned...

TT: We used to feed 1700 people a day [note: on holidays] at Cascades. We had 110 people with us. We had 55 cottages. I'll tell you; the help was wonderful. If you worked for me, I didn't say, "Do this. Do that. Can you clean that up? It doesn't look good." They knew I was a fanatic for cleanliness. I sound like I'm boasting, but they adored me.

When we bought the Cascades, it was only open 6 months a year. I said to my wife, "Norma, 6 months a year. They can't make a living wage. They are going to have to go look for part time job. We are going to make it 9 months a year." We'd close New Year's Eve with a big New Year's Eve party. We had a big orchestra, bar and dancing. We served our Sunday brunch. We didn't want them to go out and kill themselves. So, they ate very, very well before they left the building. Then we closed the next day. We asked the help to come in. We gave them their last check. We always gave them a good bonus. We were like family. When we'd re-open, they'd come and hug me. It was like part of my family. It was my family.

I used to have the cooks, everybody, clean their station before they'd go home. We used to close at 10-11 o'clock. Then I used to have a man come in at night and clean on top of the clean. He worked all night. I'm leaving at 11 o'clock or so to go home and the cleaning man was just coming in. I'd be back at 5 in the morning, and he'd just be finishing. I'd say, "Alright. Have you had any breakfast?" "No."

“Alright. Go and make yourself a fried egg or something.” It was family. They all stuck together and worked together.

NMS: I read an article about the Cascades that talked about the reason behind the name for the Cascades?

TT: The Cascades originally was 60 acres behind the building. It was built by 5 businessmen. That was a farm. The whole front was where they grew vegetables and all that. There was a house and a big old barn. No nails in the barn, it was all done with wooden pegs. 60 acres, 40 acres on the other side. There was a flea market or something. They had tables out there. They sold that while we were negotiating. I thought, we should have owned that.

The Cascades was a 65-foot natural waterfall. All the ice and everything coming down the river would go over that fall and go all the way to Pine Point and out to sea. There was a small building there and they had hibachis and you’d come over there and you could buy ice cream or hot dogs to cook yourself on the hibachi. There was also a bridge over the falls, and you could walk over and see the water churning, especially during the season when everything is melting. Some wise kids and burned down the bridge. What they did is they stocked it with fish, trout. They dammed it to slow it down and stocked it with trout. If you came over there, you could rent a canoe. If you caught a fish, you’d bring it to the Cascades and they used to pan fry it for you, for free.

There's a lot of history there. There's a little mine out there. There's a lot out there, in back of the Cascades. People have no idea how much was there.

NMS: I read that it used to be an Indian settlement where the cascades were?

TT: Right. Yeah.

It was a shame. When I bought it, the food was lousy before we bought it. People would drive by the Cascades and wouldn't even look over there. I said, "You know what we are going to do to catch their attention?" I put up the yellow aluminum roof. They had just a small sign. I had a 25–30-foot sign with a marquis on it installed. We were open 9 months a year. But the crew made the Cascades. I've got 2 hands. How much can I do? I asked them. I never gave anybody orders. I asked them, "Would you do this? Would you do that?"

MT: What? (laughter)

TT: We built the whole kitchen, new.

MT: What? You never gave orders? (laughter)

TT: Not really. I mean, not in the sense like...

MT: I know what you are saying. No, no, no. I know what you are saying.

TT: Everybody's got a name. I may be the boss, but I'm no better than you. I'd ask them in a nice way.

MT: That's true. You would do anything that anybody else had to do. That's true.

TT: I'd wash toilets. I'd clean floors. If the dishwasher didn't show up...Sunday mornings, we were packed. A thousand people would come through during Sunday morning brunch. If the dishwasher hasn't come in, I'm in there washing dishes.

MT: There was a silent film, motion picture done there.

TT: Yes. Right. There was an Indian they built a couple of cabins up there. There was a movie with these Indians would hunt and all that. They made a movie out of that.

There was a small zoo over the bridge, on the other side was all flat. The bear cage is still there. A huge bear cage that is still there. They had little monkeys and small deer. The monkeys, they used to take and house them around the furnace. We left and went south for the winter. The janitors were stoking the fire to keep the pipes from bursting. They had the monkeys all around near the furnaces.

MT: That was before he took it (laughter)

TT: Yeah. Before I took it. They got smart.

MT: Yeah, but he's got a monkey story for you afterwards (laughter)

TT: Monkeys are smart. They saw how the guy opened the door to put the food in. One opened it, then they opened all of the others and there were monkeys all over the building. They were chasing the monkeys.

MT: Why don't you tell them about your monkey...or Plato's monkey.

TT: Chico. My brother Plato went to Cuba with a friend. How he got it over here, I don't know.

MT: You couldn't do that now, obviously, bring a monkey from Cuba. We are talking in the early 1950's.

TT: He brought this monkey home. My mother got stuck with it. So, she put a blanket over the radiator as you came in the house on Birch Street. He slept on this blanket. It was in the kitchen where at least it was warm. But next to it was an ironing board. My mother would open it and put the iron down. The next thing we knew, he's got the iron and he's running back and forth on the ironing board. He would love to eat cherries. You know, they are supposed to be dirty but...

MT: This was a clean monkey.

TT: He would pick one up (smacking his lips) put it down and take another one.

MT: Believe me, for my grandmother to have a monkey in her house, he had to be clean.

TT: She was like I am. I learned cleanliness and everything needing to be spotless. That's how I ran the Cascades and how I run whatever I've done in my life.

MT: We won't get to the demise of the monkey.

NMS: I going to ask you to take a step back. After you went to Maine Maritime and worked for Onassis, you joined the military I believe.

TT: Not yet.

NMS: How did you get into the military?

TT: The next thing, the ship had gone to the Far East. I was home while it went to the west coast. They were supposed to call me and fly me to where my ship was coming in. The officer was off that weekend and didn't leave a note to call me and let me know the ship was in and make flight arrangements. When I called, my bags were packed. I knew when it was coming. I called and said, "What is the story?" "Gee. We forgot to call you. We can get you there just about the time it sails out. But if you are held up in an airport, we're sending you for nothing. You'll have to catch the next ship." I said, "I don't want the next ship. I love the

captain and the crew that worked there.” So, I didn’t go to work for Onassis. I went to work for Isbrandtsen. Isbrandtsen were American-Norwegian people. They were American. Every two weeks, they had a ship going around the world. The beautiful thing about that is we could only carry 16 passengers on any cargo/merchant ship. Only 16 was Coast Guard regulations. These were the rooms that officers had during the war. They slept, whoever was on that ship, was next to me. You know what it was to go around the world with your boyfriend, husband or alone or with a friend? \$1250 for a four-month cruise around the world. Thirty-two different ports around the world. Let me say this, the beauty part of it. You got to Singapore, Hong Kong or anywhere and say, “Gee. It would be nice if we could get off and see ...” You could get off and for no extra charge, we were never full, and catch the other one coming 2 weeks later. Every 2 weeks, there was an Isbrandtsen ship. That’s where I sailed and saw most of the world, because of Isbrandtsen.

Onassis was straight to Europe, back and forth. Get the cargo, bounce around with no cargo in the ship. I decided, I was a partner with my brothers Plato and Jim. Paul had started his own business. I said, “It’s time for me to go back home.” I stopped being in the merchant marine. That summer, I’m having a great time. The only time they could call me is in the case of an emergency. I’m home, having a great time. I’m going to the Pier [note: Old Orchard Beach Pier which included a large dance hall with big name acts at the time]. That was the real pier then. All of a sudden, there was a ship. It carried 130,000 gallons of oil, gasoline and jet fuel. The Chief Engineer came down with appendicitis. They had to take him out. The ship is ready to leave. They have no Chief Engineer. They said, “We’ve got to

find someone so we can get out of here with this load. Oh. That guy Truman. He's got a lot of experience." They sent me a telegram. The next morning there was a chauffeur at our house, and he drove me straight to the ship. I went aboard and we left. I was 2 years as a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy.

NMS: So, you were in the Navy, and you didn't do boot camp?

TT: No, no. I had training. I was at Maine Maritime. I was in the merchant marine. No boot camp. Then finally I came home. That's when I bought the Cascades.

NMS: Now, you served in the Korean War?

TT: Yeah.

NMS: You were physically there as well?

TT: Yeah. Yeah. I'm trying to think of the ports. There were so many of them.

NMS: People don't talk about the Korean War that much.

TT: No. That's a dirty...because of what happened there.

NMS: So, tell me about your perspective on the Korean War.

TT: I don't know that much about it. I used to go up the, I forget the name of the river. We used to bring cargo: ambulances, ammunition, guns and everything for the side that we were favoring. We'd go up the river and we'd see little kids on both sides with machine guns. If you weren't the right people or the enemy, they'd shoot you down while you are coming up. So, we went up and brought all of this cargo and came back. They didn't let us go too many places there. We brought the cargo, then we left.

MT: It was a supply ship.

TT: I'm going to go off the story a bit. When my brother Plato ran for Congress, people in Biddeford would say, "What about the Korean War?" He said, "All I know is what you know, what you read in the paper. But, if I'm elected, I will go to Korea, come back and write the whole story about Korea." He didn't win but he went to Washington and got a permit to go around the world and go to Korea. He had an interview with the pope. From there he went around, and he ended up (what was the name of the big hotel there?) Anyways, when he got back, he wrote the story about what he thought about the Korean War. He was there more than I was. I wasn't allowed to go on shore because they'd shoot you if you were on the wrong side. But he did something that most people would never do. "If you don't vote for me, to hell with you." (Pardon my English) But he said, "Win or lose, I'm going to go to Korea and I'm going to write. He wrote a whole paper.

MT: It was more Vietnam. That was later.

TT: Yeah

NMS: I did see, since you bring up your brother Plato, that you worked very hard on his campaigns?

TT: Yes, I did.

NMS: Can you tell us about his service?

TT: He was, where was he stationed?

MT: Out west somewhere.

TT: He and his (Milton) father (Paul) were co-chairmen promoting my brother Plato. He should have won. What they did was dirty politics. They are dirty on both sides. I'm not a lover of politicians. All of them, not all of them. How can you be there for 50-60 years? Sure, speech writers, they have a chauffeur, a bodyguard. They eat on us every day. The gymnasium, the whole bit.

MT: There were several campaigns that they were part of. The one that he was in charge of was the one for Congress. The first one was the US Senate. That was a very close election, when he was running against Margaret Chase Smith. A guy named Judge Elmer Violette defeated him by a very short margin. Partly, the thinking back then was they ran another guy from Portland to take away his votes.

His name was Smith. And they are running against Margaret Chase Smith. He only lost by 1500 votes.

Then Ted took over the campaign for the Congress. It was tough times to try to beat the incumbent who was Peter Kyros at the time. Mr. Kyros was part of the union. The union was very strong during that time period. It just didn't work out. Plato's love of politics kept him going.

TT: He loved politics.

MT: He just loved politics. He wanted to do good things.

TT: He wasn't looking to go and make money.

What we'd like to see, and it will never be done, are term limits. You go in 2 terms, and you get out. Years ago, when this all started, the farmers would go for 2 years. Fishermen would go for 2 years. But you didn't make a living and stay there and have a speechwriter, chauffeur and bodyguard. I mean, all of these people, look at them all...50 years, 60 years.

MT: You can tell them you were in the State legislature.

TT: Yeah

NMS: Tell me about your experience with that.

TT: Well, I lost money going. Plato said, “You have to go and keep me informed.” He was running for Congress.

MT: Plato went in first and then Ted wanted to serve after that. Then he went back running the family business. He did both. He was in the family business. I think he met his beautiful wife at the same time. No, maybe a little bit after.

TT: After. But you know, I don’t have a good word for either side. Why are you there for 50 years, 60 years? Then as lobbyists, they go in as average wage earner and come out as multi-millionaires? Where did you get all of this money? You only get \$200,000 a year or whatever. I don’t like them.

NMS: What was it like when you were campaigning?

TT: Paul, his father, and I did the campaigning. We went everywhere. We were actually a little classy and we did things like buffets. We did things as that’s the way we are. We are givers. Paul and I had a good time doing it.

MT: Politics was different then anyway. Politics was fun. You knew the players to begin with. You might have served with them. They might live down the street. They still got along. It was just during that time period when you would make believe to [made gesture of butting heads]. Then after that you’d still be friends. (Note: comments made regarding a related picture they were looking at that we’ll take a picture of and include)

NMS: Something that you brought up and haven't had a chance to talk about it yet, tell me about your beautiful wife. How did you meet?

MT: (laughing) There you go.

TT: Ok. You asked for it. I always went to Florida. Working in seasonal stores with the family, everything slows down, mostly in Old Orchard. I used to tell Jim, "You've got 2 children. They've got to go to school. You've got to stay here. I don't have to stay here. There isn't enough business for me to stay and you stay." So, I used to go to Fort Lauderdale every year, for 6 months.

I was in the doctor's office and saw the Mark III Lincoln Continental. They hadn't made that car for 15 years. It had a spare wheel on it. Beautiful automobile. I went to Swearingen Motors. That's who owned the Lincoln dealership for the whole state. I said, "Mr. Swearingen, I'd like to put my order in (I was in the legislature) for a new Mark III." He said, "Mark III. There is no such car." I said, "I read somewhere..." He said, "Listen. Every Lincoln car that comes into Maine, I have a commission for. I should know, shouldn't I?" I said, "Yeah. I guess so. Will you do me a favor? Put my name down." Two weeks later, he calls me up. "Mr. Truman, can you come in? I have a video here I'd like to show you." I went in there, and there is the Mark III. I was the first one to buy the Mark III. Beautiful car with a spare wheel and Oh God it was... John Martin [note: Maine House Representative from Eagle Lake] offered a thousand dollars more. A thousand was a lot of money back then. I paid only, not only, \$10,000 for this car. Beautiful car, \$10,000. Everything is relative. He offered them a \$1,000 more to

the get the number 1 car. He said, "Listen, Representative Ted Truman already signed up and I promised it to him." Then, her (his wife, Norma) brother never should have bought the car. He bought a canary yellow Mark III for their mother. She was an older woman. The two-door car, had a big door. I mean she should have had a four-door car, not two doors.

So, OK, let's get to Fort Lauderdale. I lived 6 months every year at this second-floor apartment. For 10 years, I lived there as a bachelor. One day, my nephew Louis, his (Milton's) brother, called up and said, "Uncle Ted, you know we've got exams coming. Everybody is out partying, drinking beer and raising hell. I can't study here. Can I come down, visit and stay with you?" I said, "Come on down." He came to my apartment. I said, "That bed is yours and that bed is mine." We got up that morning and went to Woolfie's, which is a Jewish deli/restaurant. It was one of the best: eggs, pastrami. It was right around the corner. I said, "Louis, we are going to have a nice breakfast at Woolfie's. You will see." We went and we are coming back. All of a sudden, we are coming down the street and around the corner two blocks from where I lived, I see this canary yellow Mark III with a flat tire. I slowed down and see Maine plates. I said, "Louis, that car is about 2 weeks old and already has a flat tire." I just slowed down. There was nobody in it. I thought, "Good luck to you and your flat tire." I went around the corner, came back but something told me to go back and see who it is. They are from Maine. I said to Louis, "Get your suit on." We were not even a block away from the beach. I said, "I'll catch up with you later. I'm going to go see who these people are from Maine with a canary yellow car." I get there, I look inside. There was nobody in the car. (For \$10,000 they put my name: This car made

expressly for Representative Ted Truman.) This car made expressly for Mrs. Herbert K. Smaha. They owned Columbia Supermarkets. They were bigger than Hannaford then. They were the biggest.

MT: They were the major league grocery store.

TT: Then I looked up and she was with Mrs. Taylor, whose husband was President of Hannaford. They were good friends. They had been out for breakfast. I see a couple of women in the hotel (with big plate glass), and they are going back and forth. You could tell they were very upset. They went in to call AAA. I didn't know AAA had pulled up. I said, "That must be the people from Maine. I went up and grabbed the door. Just about then, they saw the AAA truck pull up. I opened the door and said, "Mrs. Smaha." Why would I know her name? Well, there's the made expressly for Mrs. Smaha sign on her car. I opened the door and I said, "Mrs. Smaha?" She said, "Yes." I'm Ted Truman from Biddeford Maine. "Oh, that's nice." She walks right past me as if I'm from AAA. Go fix the tire. What are you doing here? I'm left there holding the door. The 2 ladies go. I said to myself, "I could be on the beach now. What the hell am I doing here?" So, I went over and start to get in my car, which is a beautiful car. It was black cherry, very unusual color. She saw me leaving and came over. She said, "Oh young man, I thought you were from AAA." I said, "Well, I came to help but, no. I don't work for AAA." She said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I live two blocks down the street." She said, "Oh. Come and see me. We'll have coffee some morning." For 3 months, every morning I had coffee with Mrs. Smaha. She had old diner

mugs, and we'd have black coffee, black coffee. I'd be there and we'd talk politics and business and then I would leave.

MT: They thought she had a young gigolo there with her.

TT: Well, the word got out. This guy had little white shorts, just a little white hair. I'm on the beach every day, well-tanned. The word got around that this guy comes in every morning and he's there for half an hour. He must be a gigolo. He goes in everyday, services for half an hour and leaves. (laughter) I was the gigolo (laughter)

She didn't tell me about her daughter. She worked for Eastern Airlines. She was a stewardess. When they closed up, she went to work for AT&T in the big office in Boston. She was going to come down and visit her mother on a break. She never told me. Finally, she said, "When are you leaving?" It was near the end of the period. I said, "I'm going next week." "Can't you stay a little longer?"

Her name was Nellie. We became friends. One of my biggest fears was what is my future (if I had one) mother-in-law going to be like? You hear these stories about how they break up marriages of their daughter or son. She said, "Can't you stay another week?" "Nellie, I've been here all winter. I've got to go to work. Old Orchard is seasonal. What's the big deal?" She said, "Well, my daughter's coming down and I would like to have you meet her." I said, "I've got to go. I'm sorry." But the company sent her down on business a week ahead. I get a call. She never called me. "Ted, are you coming over for coffee?" I said, "Nellie, don't

I always?” She said, “I was just wondering.” Norma came in the night before. She was out sunning herself. She had to come up these steps from the patio and then enter the door into Nellie’s apartment. I come up the steps, white shorts, good tan, fairly good-looking in those days. She sees me go into her mother’s apartment. I guess she probably heard the stories about the gigolo. She came over. I’m sitting down. Nellie has the coffee for me. Then, I saw a teacup. I said, “What a minute. Two coffee cups. What’s the teacup?” “Norma drinks tea.” All of a sudden, the door opens, and Norma comes in. Nellie says to me, “Oh Ted, I want you to meet my daughter, Norma.” She came in and said, “What are you doing tonight?” “I don’t know. I’m getting ready to leave this weekend.” “Well, I had the supermarket send me some nice steaks. I’ll cook a couple of steaks, baked potato and so forth. We’ll have dinner together. I’m sure you don’t have anything in your apartment. You’d have to go out to eat.” I said, “OK.” I came over. We had dinner together. Then I took her for a walk on the beach. We talked. Then, I left. All the time that I was going back to Maine, I was thinking about her. I said, “She is a nice gal.” When she got back, I called her. I took her out. We went out to dinner in Boston. That’s started it all.

NMS: And here you are, how many years later?

TT: Over 50 years later, with the same woman. But see, I had no worries about my future mother-in-law. We were buddies. I mean, we’d talk politics, business this and that. She was like a girl my age like I’m talking to you. Oh, people said, “You’ve got to get married because some get engaged and then they break up.” I

said, “Listen, we set the date for November 29th. I have a business to run, day and night, in Old Orchard. When the season is over, then we’ll have the wedding.

The wedding was at the Eastland Hotel ballroom. The head table was raised. They were greeting the people coming in. There was a songbird in a little cage twirping away. First class: prime rib, open bar. It was really something. Then we couldn’t...where’s my car? The kids took my car and hid it. They decorated it all. Finally, I got it and we drove off.

NMS: Was it done according to Greek traditions? Did you have Greek food?

TT: No, no.

NMS: Do you still honor Greek traditions?

TT: Yeah. I do. I’ve been pretty good. I’ve made money and donated to the church.

MT: The thing back then though, the same as my marriage, you had to get married twice.

TT: Oh yes. Thank you. Go ahead.

MT: Back then, they didn’t acknowledge. Today, you can get married in one church, it’s the same. Back then you had to get married in the Greek church first,

then the biggest ceremony might be at the Catholic church afterwards. So, you got married twice actually (laughter)

TT: In the Greek tradition, you go around the altar 3 times. For some reason, they didn't count right. We went around 4. Norma said to me, "What's this 4. Don't they know how to count?" We had the wedding and the next night we had it at the Cathedral in Portland, the big one up on the hill.

She was wonderful. I'll tell you. We went out with her many times in Fort Lauderdale. The mother was a member of the most exclusive

NMS: Where you and your family have had so many businesses, what was the impact when all the mills started closing? Were you here or were you traveling during that time?

TT: I was here. We were open 7 days per week. I used to play football in the daytime, go home and have dinner at 5 o'clock. I would come down at 6 and relieve one of the brothers that was running the store. At 11 o'clock the mills would be letting out. We would stay open until they all came up. I'd go look down the hill all the way to the mills and the Puritan. When nobody was coming, I closed up and get the hell out of there.

MT: Wouldn't you say that by the time the mills started to close down, you were on to other businesses. That was beyond that period.

NMS: When the mills shut down.

TT: Oh, closed completely

MT: You were on to the restaurant and motels and stuff like that. But, the sisters kept running the store.

TT: The sisters took it over. It was T Sisters.

MT: I think it was that time period. If it wasn't for eminent domain taking over that building, it might still be there today.

TT: That was bad. They took that building by eminent domain to straighten out Pool Street. They took the two buildings. All these stores, two buildings, apartments, the whole thing. And I think they only paid my mother like \$125,000. That was terrible.

MT: What happened to that family is that it was actually 3 times that they were taken by eminent domain.

The first one was the Biddeford Post Office. His father owned where the Biddeford Post Office is. There was a bar there called Walker's Cafe that was actually run by Mickey Walker. He was a famous boxer. Mike Siran's father and John Siran's grandfather. They took over that property first.

Then, they took over another restaurant he owned in Saco called the Hitching Post by eminent domain.

Then by eminent domain again, on Alfred and Pool Street because those properties were prime spots. You got 3 strikes on those.

TT: Oh yeah, that one was a bad one.

NMS: Another historical thing, and just share whatever you're comfortable sharing, is we are living through one right now, with COVID. How has that impacted you?

TT: At about 5 years of age, I had scarlet fever. My whole body was covered in white flakes. Fifty percent of the kids that age died. There were no vaccinations or nothing. My poor sister, Alice, is the only one that is still living. (She lives in Lowell. Her husband died but has a couple of wonderful sons. In fact, one of them, Peter, is Vice President of Merrill Lynch in Boston.) I was quarantined. They gave me my mother and father's bedroom. When you first came into the apartment, right on the left, he had that bedroom because he'd come in late at night after he closed the store. He didn't want to disrupt anyone who was sleeping. The boys, we were four in one room. All of a sudden, and I never had a toy. My father never gave my mother any money. She had to go into his pocket when he was sleeping, and she bought this metal constellation plane with propellers. I never had a toy. I went "Wow." She thought I was dying. Then all of a sudden, Alice sneaks in, jumps on my bed and I'm going, "Eeeee." My mother came in and said, "Oh,

my poor little girl. She is going to die.” Scarlet fever was a big, big thing. But it worked out alright.

MT: The question comes back to the time of COVID, in the last couple of years. You guys were very strict. You couldn’t do much but stay here. During that time period in the last couple of years, you couldn’t go out much. Friends couldn’t visit you as much. You were pretty limited.

TT: That’s right.

NMS: Starting to wrap this up, one of the questions that I had is you got to see the world but came back to this area. Why? What brought you back here?

TT: My family. We were close. I remember Thanksgiving. We’d be running Throumoulos Market. We’d say, “Ok. You go up and eat.” We were on Birch Street, next to Birch Street School. Across the street was the St. Joseph’s Girls School and St. Louis. My mother would cook and the whole table was full of food. “OK you guys, the brothers, you go and come back and then let us go.” That’s how we went. We were very close,

NMS: The last question that I usually like to ask is, “What would you like people to take away from hearing your story?”

TT: I always treated someone the way I wanted to be treated. Especially at the Cascades. I washed dishes when they didn’t show up. I washed toilets. I never

told anybody to do anything without asking. I may be the boss, but they're humans. I never threw my ownership of Cascades around. I never told someone to do something I wouldn't do myself. I was a super, extremely...everything had to be clean. I love people. You treat them like you want to be treated yourself.

NMS: Is there anything else you want to add? I'm all done with my questions.

TT: No. Whatever you ask, I'll try to answer it because I've lived it. I'll think of some stuff after you leave, but. No, I've had a great life. A very wonderful life traveling all over the world, through every canal. Here, there and everywhere. I've met people all over the world. Thanks to Isbrandtsen. Onassis, we went there, drop the cargo and come right back. Wherever there was money, that's where he sent us. I enjoyed my life, playing sports.

The Biddeford people were my people. Money was very tight. We were cashing checks, \$15 a week. They had 5 children, but they were always clean, polite, well dressed. They didn't have any money. My father and uncle both took very few charges. There were a few people around the neighborhood, he would allow to charge. Friday when they got their checks, my dad and uncle never lost a penny. French people and us, were very close.

MT: Like any grocery store back then, you ran into contact with a lot of people. I don't care who it was. If you needed some bread or something on Sunday, or some milk, the store was open.

TT: We were open 7 days a week, don't forget.

MT: It was a big deal back then. The big markets weren't open on Sunday. That's how they survived.

TT: We could have closed another day, but we were open 7 days a week.

MT: There were a lot of markets. There was every corner that had a market.

TT: Yeah. Everybody knew the Throumoulos brothers because we were open 7 days a week and if they wanted something, we had it. When you came in the store, there was a long counter with little windows that had different pastas. They'd say, "I don't know what that is called but give me a pound of that." There were no packages of pasta. They came in long. For the average person, you'd take the thing, break it and wrap it. But don't you dare do that for the Italians. They want it long. They are Italian and this is the way they eat it.

NMS: There is one other question that I thought of. Tell me about your name.

TT: My name. Oh yes. My name was Throumoulos. That's when the guy called me Smitty. The 2 years I was on the Onassis, they called me Smitty. I travelled all around the world and people would say, "What? What is your name?" Then I had to tell my life history and all that. I came back and I told my brother, "I'm changing my name. You guys, everybody knows the Throumoulos brothers. But I've traveled everywhere and when I tell them my name...What? How do you

spell it? Then I have to tell them my life history. I'm changing it." They thought I was crazy. At first, I was going to change it to Ted True. True didn't sound musical or romantic. I don't know why I picked Truman.

MT: I think part of it was in the late 40's, early 50's, Truman was also adored in Greece. [Note: Harry Truman was the US President from 1945-1953]

TT: Yes

MT: It seemed to be a right fit, for them. (laughter) My father was the last one to change.

TT: Yeah. They all changed after I did. We went to the Judge of Probate. Paid \$15. They changed my name and that's it. I got papers that changed Throumoulos to Truman. I was the first one.

MT: I think it was mostly because of the business reasons. I was just easier. But, you know what, it's not that easy. People today say, "What is your name?" I'll say, "Like Harry." "Who was he?" They don't even know.

TT: Oh, let me tell you. Norma and I lived in Fort Lauderdale. There was a cold wave coming in. We said, "We've never been to Key West. Let's go down there. It's 100 miles south so it must be a little warmer." The motels then had a little grate with an electric coil. That was all they had in the motels. They didn't have any heat and air conditioning. We get down there and we are freezing. I said,

“Norma, let’s get the hell out of here.” We went all of this way to warm up as we were freezing. We are in Key West. As we are going by, we see... Norma said, “We’d better get breakfast, but Sunday morning is going to be tough. We will have to wait in line.” I said, “So, we’ll wait in line.” We went over and there are about 25-30 people waiting. I went down and put my name in, Truman. By the time I came back, “Mr. Truman, your table is ready.” Norma said, “What did you give him, a big tip or something? They are all waiting, and we are going to go right in?” We had our breakfast and saw Truman Avenue where he lived. “Oh. They thought we were relatives of Harry Truman.”

NMS: OK. Well, thank you so much for taking the time share your story.

MT: Thank you for coming to see him.

TT: I left a lot, but you know I go from one story to another but can’t help it.

NMS: You have a lot of stories to tell.

TT: I’ve done so much. You know when I used to get up at the club we belonged to, every year I would have 50-75-100 people for dinner. Then we always had a woman with a cello, we had magicians and all kinds of stuff. The last one we did, I said, “Every year, most of the people are the same ones we have. We have an open bar and everything for them. I pay for it. Usually, I have some kind of entertainment. This year, I’m the entertainment.” I start talking. When I start talking, as I said, I can talk until the cows come home. You know how Norma tries

to get me to stop? She goes like this (motions index finger between the eyes). That's her sign. She started to go like this...which means shut up and get the hell off the stage (laughter). We've had some fun and been really lucky.

NORMA: That's not the finger I used.

TT: Yeah. Well alright. We've had some good times. We've done a lot of things. We were lucky.
...Oh yes!

MT: (laughter)

NORMA: I don't think she wants to know about you. I think she wants to know more about Biddeford. (laughter)

TT: Well, I can't help it. I'm on this thing. We did something that only 200 people in the world have done.

NMS: What's that?

TT: The Concorde, airplanes. There's 2 left. They were going to finish them forever. I heard about it. I went down and was told they were sold out, the one in Miami. They were sold out. I said, "Can I put my name in?" He said, "Listen, we've got the money already. It's sold out." 100 people. There was an astronaut

on board. There was an open cockpit. In fact, I have a picture of the big cockpit. Open doors and all that. Caviar, champagne, the works.

NORMA: The worst seats in the world. Uncomfortable.

TT: Terrible. It only took 4 hours to get to Europe. They had uncomfortable seats, the portholes were about this big (Note: indicating small size, about the size of a US passport) if you wanted to look out. We didn't think we were going to be on them. All of a sudden, they called us up. "Mr. Truman, are you still interested?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "If you can get a check down here tomorrow, you're on." They said, "Ok. You're on." We were on TV. I had a red jacket, black pants and a black shirt. The cameras were there as we were going up the gangway. We got in the plane. There were only 100 people from here and 100 from New York, two planes. We traveled twice the speed of sound. The pilot said, "We can't put our after burners on. But when we get 3 miles away from here, we are going to put them on. Don't get scared. You are going to feel a jolt." Then we took off. We were between one plane that was on this side and Haley's Comet was going. We chased it all the way to South America going twice the speed of sound. We turned around and came back. We were a little over 65,000 feet and we looked out. I had goose bumps on top of goose bumps. You could see the whole world. You know what it is to be up there?

NORMA: It was very exciting.

TT: It was very exciting. We all had a chance to go 2 at a time to meet the astronaut, look in and see the pilots. I have a picture of it over there. We were 2 of 200 in the world that ever chased Haley's Comet on the Concorde.

Norma: We were supposed to get a new rug in our apartment. But, we had to wait until next year.

TT: Yes. (laughter). She was supposed to get a new rug. I said, "Forget the rug. We are going to do this."

NMS: I'm going to turn this off now.