



Interview with Daniel W. Dorn

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
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Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

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Name of Interviewer: Gloria Stravelli
Premises of Interview: 23 Wallace Street, Red Bank, NJ
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Ms. Stravelli: Were you born in Monmouth County?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, Asbury Park.

Ms. Stravelli: And was your dad already a photographer?
He had the theater there, didn't he? The Nickelodeon?

Mr. Dorn: Well, he had all kinds of businesses. He was an innovator. He ran the first Nickelodeon in Asbury Park. You know what a Nickelodeon was?

Ms. Stravelli: A machine that you looked in?

Mr. Dorn: No, it was a moving picture house and you paid a nickel and you saw the show for ten minutes and then you went out and another group of people went in. He ran the projector. It was like a small movie theater. They called them Nickelodeons. Then he had a vulcanizing business where he repaired tires and actually built tires. This was in about 1905 or 1906.

Ms. Stravelli: Where was he born?

Mr. Dorn: My Dad was born in Georgia. East Point, Georgia.



Daniel Dorn, Sr., 1940

Ms. Stravelli: His middle name is DuBouchet, right? Do I remember that correctly?

Mr. Dorn: That's his middle name. It's French. There were two theaters in Red Bank and they wanted to try to form a union of the stage hands and operators. And they were one man short, so a person my Dad was acquainted with got him to come to Red Bank as a projectionist in one of the theaters so that they could start the union.

Ms. Stravelli: Was that the Strand?

Mr. Dorn: The Strand and the Empire. You wouldn't remember the Empire. The Empire was a theater right across from the Savings and Loan place on Monmouth Street; it was this little one story thing, and it was a moving picture theater and vaudeville. He started in the Strand theater, but then they got him to move to the Empire and operate the projectors and the spotlight there for the stage performances, the vaudeville. The theater had a flat roof, and right along side of the theater was a Sears Roebuck, which had a sharp angled roof. They had about eighteen inches of snow one night, and it was a wet snow, so it clung to the roof. When it thawed, it slid onto the theater and brought the whole thing down. So that was the end of that!

Ms. Stravelli: Were you already working with your Dad when you were a young boy?

Mr. Dorn: Well, I was only seven years old then, and I used to come up and visit him. But at that time Red Bank was very different than it is now.

Ms. Stravelli: Now, did you live in Red Bank at the time?

Mr. Dorn: Dad moved up here in 1916; that's when he came up to help form the union and project in the theater. I was born in Asbury Park, and when I was six years old, in 1916, we moved to Red Bank. I was born in 1910. I used to come up and visit. Monmouth Street had trolley tracks and the streets were all brick.

Ms. Stravelli: Cobblestones?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, Belgian block, they called them; they were like over-sized bricks. I think, at that time, Broad Street was too, until they tore it all up and paved it. When I was here the trolleys were operating; they replaced the horse and buggy for transportation.

Ms. Stravelli: They ran on Monmouth?

Mr. Dorn: They ran to Rumson, Sea Bright, Long Branch...

Ms. Stravelli: Did the trolley go down to Asbury?

Mr. Dorn: I think it did. Asbury had trolleys. I think, as a matter of fact, they went all the way down the shore to the Sea Girt area. You could go all the way to Trenton by trolley. You had to go to Perth Amboy by trolley, and then they had a high speed trolley that went to Trenton from Perth Amboy. That trolley era only lasted maybe eight years or so, and then the busses replaced the trolleys; that's when they paved over Broad Street and Monmouth Street on top of the tracks. In fact, on Broad Street they dug up the tracks during World War I for the metal - to get the metal to make arms and things. I remember that.

Ms. Stravelli: You went to school in Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. When we came, the road we lived on, Pinckney Road, was a dirt road. It was about a quarter of a mile long, so they used to have sulky races right in front of our house, from one end of Pinckney Road to the other. You know with their little carts, like at Freehold Raceway.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, I had one brother and one sister.

Ms. Stravelli: And when Dad was the projectionist, had he started doing the newsreels yet?

Mr. Dorn: No. He was a field cameraman for Fox News. In other words, they'd assign him, they'd give him work as a steady photographer, they'd send him on assignments, like if they wanted to send a crew down to photograph the ice boats, for a special, he'd make all the arrangements. He got me a card so I could be a cameraman. For a couple years I was a field representative.

Ms. Stravelli: So did you see any important events?

Mr. Dorn: I saw about five or six big houses in Sea Bright go down. Remember the big storms? We photographed that right while the storm was on. I remember that the big old-fashioned cameras were heavy and they had a tripod, and I'd try to get it set up, and it would be in the sand. It would sink down in the sand and I had to hold onto it. And you had to grind it with a hand crank.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you learn your photography skills from your father?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. I'd go in there and help him and just learn. I learned to be a projectionist - I always had a job, he always had a job for me. After the Empire collapsed, he worked for a while in the Strand, and then they built the Carlton Theater, which is now the Count Basie Theater. We stayed in Red Bank, but his job was in Belmar. He took charge of seven theaters, going to the city to pick up

seven shows, and then they'd rotate through the chain. Seven theaters was a small theater chain.

Ms. Stravelli: When you say shows, do you mean movies or live shows?

Mr. Dorn: Movies. He picked up the reels.

Ms. Stravelli: More than just the newsreel, he did the movie itself too, didn't he?

Mr. Dorn: Well, he didn't do the show - he'd pick up the seven shows for the seven theaters, and they'd rotate them around so that each theater got a chance to run that show. I used to go with him on a Saturday and I would run his second show - there were two shows a night in the theater, and I would run the second show. I was so little that I had to stand on a box to thread up the projector.

Ms. Stravelli: Oh, my gosh, how old were you?

Mr. Dorn: At that time I was about fourteen. He'd go out on the little balcony there and take a nap during the show.

Ms. Stravelli: Do you remember any of the movies?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. There were movies with Mabel Norman and Janet Gaynor, and Buddy Rogers, and the film *Seventh Heaven*. I ran the first color movie: *The Black Pirate* with Douglas Fairbanks. I used to run his second show for him. When I was fourteen, the owners had two theaters; and one was a summer theater. And they switched the reels back and forth so that the two theatres could run the same show the same night. The theater in Belmar would run three reels and then they'd run them down to the beach. They'd start the three reels, the switcher would pick up two more, take them back, then take three back to the main theatre, and they'd run them back and forth. Once, two weeks before the season ended, the projectionist in the summer theater didn't show up. He didn't tell us he wasn't coming, he just didn't show up, so the manager of Dad's theater ran up to him and said, "What am I going to do, Dan, what can I do?" And my Dad pointed to me and said, "He can run it." So I ran that for two weeks. The next year I got a job running the main theater in Belmar. I was fifteen then. The next summer I got a job switching reels in Spring Lake, at the Colonial Theater. A theater in Spring Lake ran the same show, and I'd ride back and forth on my bicycle with the reels. The year after that I got a job running the projector in the Colonial Theater in Spring Lake. So I never had to look for a job. And then Dad decided to make movies instead of showing movies. He was a field cameraman with Fox news reel at the time, but he got the idea of making these romance pictures with advertising and a little romance story woven through it. In the meantime, I got a job one summer at an open-air theater in Sea Bright. That was when I was eighteen. I used to go back and forth on my motorcycle, and that's when I got my license. And that was run by a man named Hoge, who was an

electrical contractor, and he owned this open air theater. Naturally you couldn't show the pictures until after it got dark. I got a job that summer running that projector. Then the following year Pop got into this advertising movie business, the romance and whatnot. I'm talking about myself, but I thought we were talking about old Red Bank.

Ms. Stravelli: Well, you're part of old Red Bank, right? You and your dad, right? What high school did you go to? You were living in Red Bank, and where did you go to high school?

Mr. Dorn: There was just the old high school that they tore down, Red Bank High School. Before they tore that down, they added the other one on Harding Road, and then later on they got into the Regional because of the increasing population. So now Harding Road is the Middle School - that's where I graduated from in 1928.



Dan Dorn, Sr. shooting romance series movies during the 1930s

Ms. Stravelli: You said your Dad went into making the romance movies, and you made them in Red Bank and Freehold, right?

Mr. Dorn: We made Freehold, Red Bank; we made about thirty of them. We went to Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Greenwich, Connecticut, three towns in Long Island, and Stapleton, Staten Island.

Ms. Stravelli: What was happening in the Red Bank that you filmed? It was a little story about a young couple getting married, if I remember correctly. And so it was to give the businesses publicity, was that it?

Mr. Dorn: The way it was tied in with business, was when they were thinking about getting married, they wanted to go buy furniture and rings and gasoline and cars and whatever the advertiser was selling.

Ms. Stravelli: So where did the movie-makers go in Red Bank for financing?

Mr. Dorn: We would go to a furniture store in Red Bank and get the owner to pay for the advertising. And then they'd go to a jeweler, buy a ring, and go to buy an automobile, whatever they needed. In Red Bank the hero of the story got a job in Wyckoff Feed and Oil, and that tied him in. It showed the boy checking the tanks, and taking the orders, and it showed Wyckoff's facilities. The advertisers paid for the whole thing.

Ms. Stravelli: Where else did they go in Red Bank? What were the stores there at the time?

Mr. Dorn: English had the Ford Agency, Wyckoff had the oil and the feed and grain, Wilber was the jeweler -

Ms. Stravelli: Wilbur Jeweler?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. Clayton McGee was the clothier; I can't remember all of them.

Ms. Stravelli: So it tied the local businesses into the story?

Mr. Dorn: They're all tied into the story.

Ms. Stravelli: And that was shown in the movie theater?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. For a whole week.

Ms. Stravelli: If I remember correctly, you took films of a lot of people in town, too.

Mr. Dorn: People coming out of church, high school classes, we'd take everything in Red Bank; I remember we took a fire drill. We set the camera up and got every kid coming out the door. We had set up a fake fire, that's how the boy met the girl in one film. We had a smudge pot in the house with smoke coming out the window, and we got the fire trucks coming to the fire - the boy would rescue the girl and it was love at first sight.

Ms. Stravelli: So the fire company was in on it too!

Mr. Dorn: Yes. We set up a ladder, and the hero runs up the ladder and takes the girl out of the window and carries her down the ladder and kisses her when he got her to the bottom. That's how he met her. Then they courted. It was the little story mixed into the film.

Ms. Stravelli: Were they locals, the young couple?

Mr. Dorn: Yes.

Ms. Stravelli: Oh, from Red Bank.

Mr. Dorn: They had a contest in the school to get the most popular couple in the high school.

Ms. Stravelli: Oh, my goodness. Do you remember who they were?

Mr. Dorn: Jimmy Stokes was the boy, his father was a dentist, and Florence McDonald was the girl. She lived right on Wallace Street. A pretty girl.

Ms. Stravelli: So you did those for a while with Dad? You said you made about thirty of those with your Dad.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York State, Long Island, Connecticut. We were in that about eight years. We made most of them in New Jersey, but Strausburg was in Pennsylvania, just over the river. Greenwich, Connecticut, of course, was the other border. We just kind of did a circle.

Ms. Stravelli: I think I remember a funny story. I saw *Romance in Red Bank*; I think somebody told me, Dan Jr. told me, last year, that they found the copy of *Romance in Freehold* in the trunk of an old car! Is that what happened?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. We have a tape of that, too. When they showed it in the American Hotel in Freehold, the boy and the girl who played in it came to the show, the hero and the heroine. That was quite a nice night when they showed it so many years later. After we filmed a movie, we left it there. We usually had a sponsor, like the Chamber of Commerce, or the Rotary Club. They would more or less check on us to make sure we were legitimate, and they were sort of sponsors. After we'd finish, we'd give them the movie because we had no use for it, and Lord knows what has happened to them all.

Ms. Stravelli: Were they shown in the theater? Were they always shown in a local movie theater?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes, every one was shown in a local theater.

Ms. Stravelli: So who paid you and your dad?

Mr. Dorn: The advertiser. There wasn't a whole lot of money in it, I'll tell you.

Ms. Stravelli: Was that during the Depression, or after?

Mr. Dorn: Did you go through the Depression?

Ms. Stravelli: I was born in 1944. I was lucky to miss it by a few years.

Mr. Dorn: You see, as business went downhill, and got worse and worse, there was less money around. The multitudes are what keeps things going. When people don't have any money, the businesses suffer. So advertising in a town where a lot of people were out of work doesn't do it. Because if they don't have the money or are out of work, they can't spend it. We had to quit making those movies because advertising was out. They tried to pump it up with advertising when it first started going down, but we just went into the Depression, and then, of course, no advertising would help. Then we got a job making a newsreel for Bamburger's. And then the same thing happened. We did it for six months and we covered all of New Jersey, once a week, a newsreel about anything that

happened in New Jersey. You see Fox News covered the whole Eastern seaboard, but this was just New Jersey.

Ms. Stravelli: Now was this during or after the Depression, or right around there?

Mr. Dorn: No this was just as it was still going downhill. So the same thing happened there. The newsreels were shown in the Warner theaters - and there were seven theaters - so we'd put the newsreel together, and we'd get seven prints, and they'd all show it because a newsreel has to be shown the same week that it happened.

Ms. Stravelli: I remember going to movies and watching the newsreels.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, well we made a newsreel just for New Jersey, it was called Bamberger News.

Ms. Stravelli: Now what events did you look for?

Mr. Dorn: Whatever. Auto races, social events, flower shows, accidents, just like a big newsreel, only just New Jersey. They would have a model airplane show with the motor-driven airplanes that they can control from the ground; they'd have a big gathering. Wherever there was a big bunch of people, you know, we'd take that. I can't remember all of them.

Ms. Stravelli: So you were again traveling constantly.

Mr. Dorn: I was the cameraman. We had two crews. I had one crew and my Dad had another crew. Because to cover the whole state, you had to have two crews. And we did that for six months, and then they cancelled because of the same reason. Advertising wasn't generating sales because there was just no money around. So we got out of that. What we made on that kept us going for another six months. Then we made an Italian movie, an Italian feature picture, called *Mamma Abandonata*; that's the "Abandoned Mother."

Ms. Stravelli: Here or in Italy?

Mr. Dorn: We did it in New York City. I had to edit it, and I don't speak any Italian. But the owner of the lab where I put it together was an Italian named Guffanti. He checked me. I'd show it to him and say, "Have I got it right?"-- cutting in the close ups, and the like. They came down to our studio -now, see, when we got into the movie business, Pop built a laboratory and a little studio right on Pinckney Road where we lived. So we could do the whole thing right there. So we did that -

Ms. Stravelli: So where was the Italian film shown? If it was in Italian, was it shown in the city?

Mr. Dorn: Well, the people we did it for couldn't pay their lab bill, so the laboratory kept the film. I don't know what they did with it. But it was made for the local theaters in the Italian section of New York City.

Ms. Stravelli: That's where my family lived in New York.

Mr. Dorn: Well, I don't know whether the lab released it and got it shown, I never found out what happened to it. But, when they reviewed the whole thing, the owner of the lab said it was alright, and I didn't speak any Italian! That was a trick! It took me two months to put it together.

Ms. Stravelli: I'll say. I'm surprised you didn't learn Italian while you were doing it.

Mr. Dorn: I learned a few bad words. Anyway, to get back to Red Bank -

Ms. Stravelli: So was that the end of the movie studio?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. Then we got into the photo shop.

Ms. Stravelli: That was in 1937 or so, right?

Mr. Dorn: It was 1936 or 1937 yes. Because I finally told Dad. I said, "This is no life for me. I can't make friends." You're only in a town six weeks and then you move to another town. You come home and put the movie together and go into another town. I lost my friends in Red Bank because I was always out of town, and I couldn't make friends in six weeks, how can you? So I told Dad one time, "Dad, I'd like to settle down at some point." I was about twenty-five. You wouldn't believe how small the shop was, the little photo shop we got into.

Ms. Stravelli: Now it was across the street at first, wasn't it? At 10 Wallace?

Mr. Dorn: It was where the Italian Gaetano's restaurant is now. And then we moved into the lawyer's building, next door, the big brick building, and then we moved across the street.

Ms. Stravelli: So you started a photo shop with a tiny little photo shop. Was it commercial, or what?

Mr. Dorn: Everything. We found a way to do everything photographic. My Dad was very clever -

Ms. Stravelli: He was an inventor, too, was he not?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, he was. He built a lot of the equipment we used. He would improvise. He took a big portrait camera and made a Photostat camera out of it, because somebody came in one day and wanted a copy of a document, so he found a way to do it. Everything he did wound up with a department; like a reproduction department or a portrait department or news and commercial department.

Ms. Stravelli: So that's how the business grew.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. We did portraits, we did passport photos, we did news work, aerial photography, any job that came in Pop would find a way to do it.

Ms. Stravelli: So you were doing not just wedding photos, you were doing everything.

Mr. Dorn: Everything photographic. It grew because the timing was perfect.

Ms. Stravelli: That was after the Depression?

Mr. Dorn: It was during the Depression. In the wintertime I made twelve dollars a week. And I was the owner. To take home. Of course, you took it all home, you paid no taxes - only property tax. In the summer people were taking more pictures, because you've got to understand, that there was no such thing as a flash camera when we started. Most of the pictures were taken with either a floodlight or outdoors. So I'd say a couple of years after we started business, they invented the flash camera. That helped things grow. Because you could take pictures anytime.



Daniel Dorn, Sr., jumping. This was the first shot taken to test the new electric flash.

Ms. Stravelli: Flash was a newer development?

Mr. Dorn: Flash was a newer thing, yes.

Ms. Stravelli: So your shop grew.

Mr. Dorn: It grew. And like I said, the photographers who were here were growing old and they dropped out, see, so it was an ideal time for a new place to open up. So we just grew like topsy.

Ms. Stravelli: Were you happy to be at home and in one place, then?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. I got married, and luckily got a wonderful girl.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you meet you wife at the shop?

Mr. Dorn: She worked for me.

Ms. Stravelli: What was her name?

Mr. Dorn: Hilda West. I used to be her boss and then we got married. And she got to be a boss!! I'll tell you a funny little story. When we got married, I never gave her a last week's salary. She was making fourteen dollars a week. She was paying board, paying bus fare, paying her lunch and laying away dresses - all on fourteen dollars a week. But I never gave her the last week's salary, right? A couple of years ago we figured out how much I owed her with the interest, and it was something like thirty thousand dollars!

Ms. Stravelli: You should have paid her that fourteen dollars!

Mr. Dorn: Yes. I'm talking about fifty year's interest, compounded interest. But we laugh at that now. She says, "You never paid me my last week's salary!"

Ms. Stravelli: Now, Dan Jr. told me last year that you kept the plates from the photographers who were going out of business. You kept the glass plates.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. There was a photographer named Andy Coleman who worked with the railroad taking action pictures and pictures of material that needed attention, like, you know, the tracks, he took pictures of what had to be done. And he also took pictures of everything in Red Bank. We inherited those plates; about two tons of them. These were glass plates.

Ms. Stravelli: Right. With the chemical on them?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. The glass plate was covered with the emulsion. We kept them all - a lot of them were scenes of Red Bank, so we sold quite a few prints of those. You ought to take a look in the lab if you want to see some of old Red Bank.

Ms. Stravelli: I think you played a big part of preserving the history of Red Bank by taking those plates and taking care of them.

Mr. Dorn: A lot of people will have some of the prints made from those plates. If they pass on and the pictures are just put away with nothing done with them, then they're gone. But the negative doesn't fade so you look through them and you can find pictures of almost everything in Red Bank. In fact, there were some aerial pictures. We're talking about when aerial photos were rare; it was the late 1800s and the early 1900s, way back.

Ms. Stravelli: Oh, my goodness. I didn't know that there were aerial photos from back then.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. We've got some real oldies.

Ms. Stravelli: Any surprises in there?

Mr. Dorn: One aerial is a shot of North Red Bank here where Riverview Hospital is; it shows that whole area. Irwin's Boat Works and the bulkhead were just being built when Dad went into business, and Riverview Hospital was just an old house. It started in a middle-sized residence. That's where Danny Jr. was born. It was just an old house. The entrance was just two or three steps in a back door - that was the entrance to the hospital. Sure, Danny was born there. That would be in 1939. And the aerial picture shows the whole area before anything was done with it. The steam boat dock, and the Old Union House, an old ice house and so forth.

Ms. Stravelli: There was a steamboat dock? There was a steamboat that docked in Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. When I was a teenager, we used to dive off of the paddle wheel, the big enclosure for the paddle wheel. They were called side-wheelers. We used to dive off of them into the river. And they were still running to and from New York.

Ms. Stravelli: From here to New York? Like a ferry?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. Red Bank grew because they had access to New York City before there was any railroad. There was no railroad then. The only way to get anything out of New York was by boat. And for years the area grew because this area needed things from the city and the city was taking the produce from the farmers. The farmers used to come to Red Bank and send their products to New York by steamboat. And we would get coal, and implements, and things that were made in the city. They'd come back here with it. So that's why this area grew and became a center for Monmouth County.

Ms. Stravelli: I didn't realize that steamboats came from New York here to Red Bank.

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes, sure. Marine Park is where they docked. We've got a lot of old pictures of the *Albertina* and the *Seabird*, two of the old side wheelers.

Ms. Stravelli: Did they carry passengers, too?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes.

Ms. Stravelli: So you could go to work in the city and visit the city, too.

Mr. Dorn: Oh, sure.

Ms. Stravelli: So Red Bank must have been a very bustling place, a lot of commerce.

Mr. Dorn: It was the hub, you might say, of the whole county. And the steamboat would stop at Rumson and Atlantic Highlands. And, of course, the vacationers would come down to Atlantic Highlands and swim in the ocean.

Ms. Stravelli: What was the fare, I wonder, back then?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, it wasn't much. People used to have excursions, you know. A whole group would go to the city for the day and then they'd come back. I have one picture of a horse and buggy that they took to the city on the steamboat deck. And then there was one group there that had a harp. It was a music group, I guess, and they went up with the harp on the deck of the boat.

Ms. Stravelli: The captain and crew were locals too?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. They had paddle wheelers that went to Oceanport, too, in the South Shrewsbury. The side-wheelers couldn't go down there because it was too shallow. So these had a stern wheel. There were a lot of famous places in that area where the vacationers would come down from the city. You know, I remember we used to have winters that had five and six weeks when you could skate and have ice boat races on the rivers.

Ms. Stravelli: I remember even when I was young we were able to skate everyday.

Mr. Dorn: And the iceboats would have great big races there. They were famous all over. People would come to compete from as far away as Wisconsin.

Ms. Stravelli: To Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, with their iceboats. But good skating and ice boating used to last sometimes six or seven weeks. No more since global warming.

Ms. Stravelli: I know. My children don't even know. They look at me like, "What are you talking about?" We used to wait for them to put the marker up so we would know where it would be safe. After school every day we would go and put on our skates, go to the pond and skate around. Somebody would make a little bonfire.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, they had automobiles on the ice, too. They had an airplane that used to take passengers up from the ice. He'd put skis on the wheels. They had a bad accident, so they stopped that. We had a long winter of fun back then. And of course they didn't plow the roads, so there'd be snow on the roads for weeks.

Ms. Stravelli: Blizzards, we would have actual blizzards. When the snow was higher than I was.

Mr. Dorn: We've got pictures of the big blizzard, too. I can't remember what year it was. I think it was 1888.

Ms. Stravelli: Now were people moving into Red Bank and the rest of the county in those days? Was it growing like it is now?

Mr. Dorn: Yes. Professionals - doctors, lawyers, surveyors, and architects, this became like a hub. The whole county was here shopping. Their customers were in the whole county because they didn't have these type of people in all those little towns. They'd come to Red Bank to get these services.

Ms. Stravelli: The surrounding area was still farms, like in Lincroft...

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. And then, of course, the surrounding areas all grew because the population grew, and is still growing. It's getting bigger and bigger.

Ms. Stravelli: Some people think so. Now the Shop eventually got big enough to move across the street?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, well, after World War II - see I've seen World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Korea, Desert Storm - I've seen all of those. In World War I, I was eight years old and, like I said, Pinckney Road was a dirt road. Our house was right on the line between Red Bank and Little Silver - the line cut right across our driveway. From our house all the way to Branch Avenue was a big pear orchard that had been abandoned, but the trees were still producing, even though they stopped picking them for the market. There were only eight houses on the whole road - and the road's a quarter of a mile long. Across the street from us, nothing. No houses on the other side of the street at all. During World War I, there was an arsenal at Morgan, New Jersey, that was sabotaged - everything blew up. I remember we had to get out of our houses and go across the street and live in the open until it was over. They didn't know where the exploding shells were going to go.

Ms. Stravelli: So Morgan wasn't that far off?

Mr. Dorn: No, I'd say eight or ten miles. We had to get out of our houses because they didn't know where the shells were going to land or anything. It was scary at the time, I remember that.

Ms. Stravelli: What year was it?

Mr. Dorn: Fall. 1918 or 1917, or something like that.

Ms. Stravelli: So that was life during World War I in Red Bank.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. And Fort Monmouth was then called Camp Vail, and they were experimenting with radio communication between the planes and the ground. The soldiers would come in trucks and set up their equipment right alongside our house, on Pinckney Road in an abandoned cornfield. This was in the fall when the corn had been harvested. They set up their equipment and experimented with communication. I remember I used to go down to the pear orchard and fill up a bushel basket and bring it back for them to eat. And they loved it. I remember the last time I ever saw them, I had a whole bushel basket of pears waiting for them, and they were coming down in their trucks, but they kept on going because they were embarking. They had finished their training and they were going overseas. And they kept right on going. I expected them to stop and set up their equipment. One of the trucks stopped and I threw the pears in the truck. That was the last I saw of them. That was my World War I experience.

Ms. Stravelli: What was it like here during World War II? You already had your photo shop, right?

Mr. Dorn: We had the photo shop and we were doing some work connected with Bendix, which made airplane parts. We made identification photos for the factories. You had to have a picture identification card if you worked in a defense plant. We bought a machine that would take the pictures and print their name and everything on it. Everybody that went on Fort Hancock to work had to have one, and that was part of our service. And we did anything connected to the War. Especially with Bendix, they were making airplane parts, and we did work for them.

Ms. Stravelli: How did it go here? I know that a lot of materials were diverted for the War effort - were there shortages?

Mr. Dorn: There were shortages, things were rationed. It was a tightening of your belt during World War II.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you have blackouts?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes. And toward the end I got drafted. I tried to enlist, but I had children and they sent me home. Then toward the end they were taking everybody.

Ms. Stravelli: My dad was drafted into the Navy.

Mr. Dorn: I was in the Navy. I got in as a photographer. I was at an experimental station where all phases of fighter planes, bombs, ammunitions, radio contact; all these departments were experimenting there and I was doing the same thing as I was before I was drafted.

Ms. Stravelli: Was that in New Jersey?

Mr. Dorn: No, that was in Patuxent River, Maryland on Chesapeake Bay. When I was stationed there they froze all of the photographers stationed there; they couldn't be moved. They gave them one rate and they were frozen in rate. So actually you were just a captive photographer and they wanted cheap help. And believe it or not, I was doing the same thing in there that I was doing here for Bendix - taking pictures of broken parts of the airplanes and everything. Another odd thing happened. There was a construction company in Red Bank that had started out by paving some of the original concrete roads in the town - this was Tuller Construction. So I walk out of where I was working one day, and here comes this truck with Tuller Construction Company on the side of it. They were building a simulated arresting gear for testing the airplanes that were going to land on a carrier. They built it on the ground, and it had to be circular so they could turn it into the wind - a carrier always turns into the wind. This had to be on a big turntable so they could turn it any way they wanted to according to the wind. And they were building that. One day I had liberty while my wife wasn't down there. (Later on they came down and stayed with me. I was only there about two years.) Anyway, I was out in front of the place waiting for the bus that served the base, and up the road comes a Tuller Construction Company truck, and I'm hitchhiking like that, and he stopped and picked me up. Tuller Construction Company, Red Bank, New Jersey. And he only took me as far as the gate. When I came back the next day they said, "Did he take you all the way to Red Bank?" I said, "Yes, he took me all the way home." Actually he only took me to the gate. That was an adventure.

Ms. Stravelli: So Dad and Mother kept the shop going here?

Mr. Dorn: Yes.

Ms. Stravelli: You had the four children already?

Mr. Dorn: No, the one we lost at Vietnam was born on the base, and the last one, our daughter Kathy, was born after the war.

Ms. Stravelli: I didn't know you lost a son.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, I've got a picture of him out in the living area. He was just twenty-one when he was killed.

Ms. Stravelli: What was his name?

Mr. Dorn: Phillip. We called him Tinker. They've got a branch of the Marine Corps League named after him. Phillip K. Dorn Detachment, US Marines.

Ms. Stravelli: Dan Jr. was in the Marines, too, right?

Mr. Dorn: Yes.

Ms. Stravelli: Was your son drafted in for Vietnam or did he enlist?

Mr. Dorn: He joined up. Danny Jr. was a Marine, too. But Danny was in and out before the War. Tinker got in at the wrong time.

Ms. Stravelli: Was he a pilot, infantry -

Mr. Dorn: He was infantry: Search and Destroy. They'd go on patrol out into the, well, it was in front of the front, they'd go into there and scout. That was a very bad war; they had these places that were prepared with tunnels. They had tunnels all over the place, like a spider web. They'd go through the tunnels and get behind our lines, and a sniper killed Tinker.

Ms. Stravelli: My friend's husband died over there, too. What was happening here during the Vietnam War, was it like the rest of the country? A lot of disagreement?

Mr. Dorn: No. No demonstrations that I can remember. People had their opinion of the war and how we got into it. It was a politician's war, and it was a sad thing that really cost us. Nixon bought our way out of it - it cost us a lot of money. What good does it do? They're still fighting. We don't seem to learn by these wars, we don't seem to learn anything.

Ms. Stravelli: No. We seem to be getting involved again. Like in South America.

Mr. Dorn: It tells us right in the Bible, wars and rumors of wars, always.

Ms. Stravelli: When did the trains come to Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: The first railroad was the Old Southern, and that came from the Highlands area down into Red Bank. And then the other main line right out of New York City was built. So at one point, there were two railroad bridges. The Old Southern went out of business so that was abandoned, but the tracks are still there. Red Bank is, to a great extent, a commuter town, a lot of people commute to jobs in Newark and New York. I was here when they electrified it about eight years ago. Now they use electric trains as far as Long Branch; then the diesels take them on down to the end of the line at Bay Head. But there are a lot of commuters on that line.

Ms. Stravelli: What do you think is the biggest change in the area that you've seen?

Mr. Dorn: I think it's the many changes in the business section.

Ms. Stravelli: How did your life change, how did the business change during this time? What's the biggest change that you've seen?

Mr. Dorn: Equipment. New equipment for copying, making copies, and the electronic flash made a big change because it flashes over and over by recharging, and flashes again and again. There used to be a thing that weighed six or seven pounds that you'd fasten to the camera. Now it's a little bitty thing built right into the camera. Now they've got digital cameras to take pictures; there are no negatives, no developing involved, and it goes onto a little chip and they take the picture and you can see right away what the picture is. You've got a little viewing thing and you take the little chip and put it into the machine and it makes the picture. Copy machines too, can do some things that are almost unbelievable. All your color copy enlargers can make an enlargement as big as four by six feet.

Ms. Stravelli: I've seen some of those photos made on a digital camera. They look real, they're so sharp. But somebody told me that the trouble with them is you can alter the picture.

Mr. Dorn: It's like on television; you don't know whether this explosion is real or miniature. It's the same with the digital camera; you don't know if this is what the camera saw or something has been altered. Take one head and put it on somebody else's body...

Ms. Stravelli: Do you think there was more skill to it when you and your Dad did it?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes there was. It was all basic, simple and basic. In fact, my dad, as I said, was an inventor. Have you seen pictures of the guy holding the flash up? He had the magnesium powder that goes off, and smoke goes up. Dad improvised a graflex camera that was synchronized with a magnesium flare, not a flashbulb. That was the forerunner of flash pictures. But he never did anything with it. What are you going to do with all this?

Ms. Stravelli: We just went from magnesium flash to the digital camera. And you've seen all that has happened, so the next generation won't forget - or they will at least know what life was like and what happened in the last Century. Your interview is a valuable record. What do you want to make sure we have in it? What should we make sure is in there?

Mr. Dorn: The photography business is a service business, plus selling merchandise, and we'd try to keep up with the times. When something new came out, we'd try to get it and utilize it in our business. Of course, photography became easier as the equipment got smaller. Because when electronic flashes first came out, there was a wet cell unit that weighed fourteen pounds and you carried it on your back. It was attached to the camera. When we went on

weddings, we'd have to carry two of them, so that when we took the groups, we'd have one on each side. So that's twenty-eight pounds just for the flash. Now they've made them so small you can put it in your vest pocket. And then they brought out color film; we went through that stage when it went from all black and white to color. When that first came along, we didn't process it, it was sent to Kodak for processing. When it was black and white we used to do it ourselves in our own lab - overnight service. And then, of course, the quality of the film and the quality of the finished product all improved. We used to have to enlarge it onto the paper from the negative and develop it, then put it in another bath, put it in the fixer, wash it for twenty minutes, and put it on the dryer. That's all gone now. You enlarge it on the paper and wash it and it's done. It dries almost immediately. So it eliminates all those other processes. So we try to keep up with all that. The business now has a digital camera, and they take the passports with it. They can see immediately what the photo looks like, and if it's not good, they take it over again right away instead of developing it. And they take that little chip and put it into the machine that makes the picture. You have to get things like that now because some of these people want everything right now. And on top of that, we take quite a few aerial pictures for real estate -



Dan Dorn Sr. (right) and son, Dan Dorn, Jr. circa 1970

Ms. Stravelli: Dan Jr. was telling me that. He goes out to Marlboro Airport a lot.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, we used to rent a plane until somebody had an accident with it and destroyed the airplane, and we had nothing to take a picture with, so we bought an airplane from the owner of the Red Bank Airport in 1966.

Ms. Stravelli: There was an airport in Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, there was a Red Bank airport, sure.

Ms. Stravelli: I didn't know that. I know there's one now in Marlboro, but I didn't know there's one here.

Mr. Dorn: It's no longer there, it closed several years ago. Marlboro is the closest one now. We keep the plane there. We've still got it, we still use it.

Ms. Stravelli: Where was the Red Bank Airport?

Mr. Dorn: It was right on Shrewsbury Avenue, where McDonald's is now, right across from the telephone company there. And there was an Airport Inn that stayed in business after the airport closed. It was an eating-place, and it was a popular while the airport was there, you know. And we went through all that with them, their air taxi service, and we'd take pictures for them. I've got a picture - our plane was the last plane to leave Red Bank Airport. They were painting on

the airport "Airstrip Closed" so that nobody would land there and I rolled over it and got the wet paint on my wheels. That was the last plane to leave Red Bank Airport.

Ms. Stravelli: You piloted the plane?

Mr. Dorn: Yes, I was a pilot - I took pictures of it. It said "Airstrip Closed" or something like that. I wanted to be the last one out. It was lonely, there wasn't another plane in the airport.

Ms. Stravelli: Why did they close it?

Mr. Dorn: Well, the owner had a bad accident. He killed himself and a couple of other people, and they had also had an accident before that where a plane landed close to the school. It went right off the end. I think there were eight people killed. Everybody in it was killed. It landed just fifty or a hundred yards from the school. There were suits, you know, insurance and everything, and it just kind of went bankrupt.

Ms. Stravelli: The area got too built up, I guess.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. It just outlasted the area. The area got too dense, and those couple of unfortunate accidents closed it up. And also, people were complaining about the noise and things. They moved there when the airport was there, and then they complained because they were near an airport. They had a lot of problems and finally closed up.

Ms. Stravelli: Now your children have kept the business going. You stepped back from the photography business a while ago. When was that?

Mr. Dorn: I retired in 1972 to get out from in front of Danny. Danny had come in with me and we worked together, but I wanted to get out of his way because he had a lot of good ideas, but I was always in front of him, you know. And my dad did the same thing. I didn't walk on my feet alone until I came back from the war in 1944. I guess I was thirty-six years old before I knew if I could stand on my own feet. So I made up my mind to get out of Danny's way as soon as I could. So at sixty-two I got out. And he never asked for any help. He wanted to do it himself. He talked a few things over with me, but he never asked for any help.

Ms. Stravelli: But he worked with you when he was younger?

Mr. Dorn: Oh, yes, we were together for a few years.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you start him off like you?

Mr. Dorn: No, I let him go his own way. He was in the Marines for a while. When he got out of high school I said, "Kid, you've got to go into college or go into the service." And he picked the service. None of us were very good students. I was the poorest student.

Ms. Stravelli: Well, I think you're a pretty good student at photography!

Mr. Dorn: I learned by doing it. That's the only way we ever did things. He did the same way.

Ms. Stravelli: Such an exciting life you had with your Dad. You were everywhere when something was happening.

Mr. Dorn: Oh, gosh, yes, and how!

Ms. Stravelli: I can only imagine, I mean, you must have seen tragedy and happiness, and natural disasters, and man-made disasters. What was the thing that stood out in your young mind most? What was the event that you saw that most impressed you?

Mr. Dorn: I wasn't involved with the Hindenberg exploding and burning, but I was around when it happened. As a matter of fact, we were at Lake Hopatcong doing *Romance of Dover* when that happened. And then the Morro Castle coming ashore, but we missed that because we were out of town.

Ms. Stravelli: What happened in Red Bank during your time as a photographer? Prominent people, or big events -

Mr. Dorn: We were here when the King and Queen of England came through. I've got a picture of that. We were all at the station; they had all the photographers fenced in so that they couldn't run out on the station. They put them out there where we could get pictures, you know.

Ms. Stravelli: Wow. Why did they come through Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: They were going out on a destroyer. They wanted to get on a destroyer at Atlantic Highlands for some of a sightseeing trip put on by the President. They came by train to Red Bank, and then by limousine to Atlantic Highlands where they boarded the ship.

Ms. Stravelli: Did the President ever come through? Any of the Presidents?

Mr. Dorn: I think so, but I don't think I was around. This was way back. The old Theodore Roosevelt at times. And President Garfield, of course, was assassinated in Long Branch, but I wasn't here then, either.

Ms. Stravelli: So Red Bank's seen a lot of history and experienced a lot of growth.

Mr. Dorn: Well, you know for the eight or nine years I was working out of town, we missed a lot of things that happened. But one of the other things that was sort of a highlight every year was the sweepstakes regatta - the powerboats with Guy Lombardo. Guy Lombardo came every year.

Ms. Stravelli: He had the Royal Canadians, right?

Mr. Dorn: Royal Canadians, right. He also had a beautiful speedboat that he used to race here in the regatta. He won it two or three years. I have pictures of that.

Ms. Stravelli: Did you get to know Count Basie, or photograph Count Basie?

Mr. Dorn: No, his father was custodian of the apartment building across the street. The building had stores on the first floor, and we had our shop there. Count Basie's father was the custodian, and he lived in a little bungalow behind the place. The bungalow's still there. The young man who helped him maintain the place lives in that bungalow now. But, like I say, we were out of town for eight years, just popping in for two weeks, to put the picture together, and then going to another town, and I missed a lot of things. And I lost track of a lot of friends.

Ms. Stravelli: But you came back. You've been here a long time since coming back.

Mr. Dorn: Yes. And then, as I said, my wife came to work for me and we fell in love.

Ms. Stravelli: That's such a sweet story.

Mr. Dorn: She wanted a family and I wanted a family - we just clicked, you know. A wonderful girl. That's why I want to keep her here. As long as I can. I promised. When you get married you make promises.

Ms. Stravelli: That's right, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, that's right.

Mr. Dorn: I guess I must have taken a hundred weddings when I was in that business, but we finally abandoned that because the competition was being too elaborate, and it just got to be too much. And the photographers got so much overtime because it was Saturday and Sunday weddings that the shop wasn't making anything on them so we stopped. But every time I took a wedding, I'd hear the ceremony. I'd say, "Did I promise that?"

Ms. Stravelli: I know, when you listen to those words, it's impressive

Mr. Dorn: It got fixed in my mind so I said, "I promised all that, and now I'm going to do it."

Ms. Stravelli: And God will give you the grace to do it, too.

Mr. Dorn: Yes, you promise before God and the company attending.

Ms. Stravelli: Where did you get married? In Red Bank, in the church in Red Bank?

Mr. Dorn: No, when I went to school there was a young fellow whose father was a minister at the church right on the corner of Red Bank where the Broadway Grill is now. That was just a big old church there. His name was Raver, Roland Raver, that was the boy's name. He became a minister, too. A friend told me about it and said, "It'd be nice if you'd go down and let Roland Raver marry you." So it was in Pemberton, New Jersey. So we went down there and got married.

Ms. Stravelli: So a friend married you, that was special.

Mr. Dorn: We often laugh about how we didn't have much then, but we made do. There were a lot of people in the same boat.

Ms. Stravelli: People started out simple then.

Mr. Dorn: We didn't need much. We always laugh about it because we had just enough money. We were going to the city overnight and then come back the next day - that was going to be the honeymoon. And this friend that got us to be married there wanted us to go to Washington to stay overnight with them. And I didn't want to go, but I'd make believe that I wanted to go, but my wife didn't want to go. She would say, "Well, if you really want to go, it's all right with me." We were in separate cars so I'd get back in the car - we had our reception in the lunch wagon - everybody paid for their own, that was our reception. So we get back in the car and I say, "Honey, I don't really want to go, but I don't want to just tell them no, so I'm blaming it on you, so you say you don't want to go. You don't want to stay at that house." Darn if we wouldn't stop again on the way down to Washington and the same thing would happen. They'd say, "You're going to stay with us, aren't you?" And I'd say, "Well, it'd be alright but she doesn't want to stay there." And she'd pipe up, "Well, if you really want to stay." So we stayed at a hotel in Washington the first night and then we stayed at their house overnight and then we came home. We only had twenty-five dollars with us. Gasoline was ten cents a gallon. We stayed at the hotel the first night, took the couple that we stayed with to dinner, and came back - on twenty-five dollars. And Pop said, "Did you bring any change back?" True story.

Ms. Stravelli: What do you think the future holds for Red Bank? What's going to happen in our area?

Mr. Dorn: Well, it's on a high right now because of the improvements that they've made. If the economy stays the way it is, Red Bank is golden, because there are several brokerage houses in Red Bank, and they employ a lot of people and pay a lot of taxes. If the economy stays up where it is, then they will have no problem. And they're doing a lot of things to promote business for the stores and everything. They're trying to get a lot of them to stay open nights, because these projects they have to bring people to Red Bank, usually bring them at night.

Ms. Stravelli: Well, people are working, so they decide to come after work.

Mr. Dorn: They want the store to take advantage of the influx of people that come here at night. Right now the ones to benefit from it are the eating-houses. The restaurants, and the eating-places, and the theater, and then they have a dance studio, and they have a karate studio. There's a lot of night activity here, but not for the retail stores. So they're trying to get them to stay open at night; we used to stay open two nights a week, way back. Then the hours start to change, and most people close like five-thirty or six - most retail stores. They're having a move now to try to get more stores to stay open at night.

Ms. Stravelli: I guess life is changing. We used to have dinner and read the paper, and now people work late and don't go home to have dinner.

Mr. Dorn: The only thing you can rely on is change. You know it's going to change. Sometimes for the better, sometimes not.

Ms. Stravelli: You saw a lot of change.

Mr. Dorn: Oh, I've seen a lot of changes, yes. I've had a good life, I've had a very good life. I like fun, I like people, and I'm still kind of scatter-brained.

Ms. Stravelli: I think you're an adventurer. I think you've done a lot and seen a lot.

Mr. Dorn: Well, you ask my family, "Is your dad really like Uncle George?" they will bust out laughing.

Ms. Stravelli: You've had a good long life, you've had a family, and a wonderful marriage, and a business that endures. Your business didn't stay stagnant, it changed.

Mr. Dorn: It just grew like topsy, although I'm not a businessman. I like to serve people. Danny is like me. He's a working boss. He works in the store at the counter, just like any other employee, and he went through the same thing I did.

When you get a tough customer, all the clerks would go in the back, and you've got to wait on him.

Ms. Stravelli: He told me last year that your advice to him, when you turned the business over, was, "If you want to keep the business going, you're going to have to make the man that comes in the door smile."

Mr. Dorn: Yes, and if you're busy, on the phone or something, you at least acknowledge that he's there, you know, because he's important. I used to say to my new employees, "Who's the most important person that walks through that door in this shop?" And they'd say, "Well, you are." And I'd say, "No, I'm not. The most important person in the place is the customer. And the second most important person is the one that waits on him. Not me. Whoever takes care of that man who walks in the door is the second most important person in the place." And I'd try to tell him to nod or acknowledge that a person is waiting. They don't get it.

Ms. Stravelli: Nowadays not so much as they used to. Dan told me your employees were like family, that people were really close.

Mr. Dorn: Most of our employees were very good.

Ms. Stravelli: You had somebody working fifty years. Eddie Ostrander, is it?

Mr. Dorn: Yes he worked there longer than I did. I retired and he kept on working.

Ms. Stravelli: Is he a relative?

Mr. Dorn: No.

Ms. Stravelli: Just a long time employee.

Mr. Dorn: Well, he had a tough childhood, so he kind of adopted me, you know, as a father figure. We got along well. These people knew their job, I never bossed them, I didn't have to. We had Earl Stout who worked with us for about forty years. And Pete Gisleson came to work right after Earl did; he just retired four years ago. They came to work after the War. When they came back from the war, a lot of these employers didn't want to take them back because they'd already hired replacements. When the veterans went to get their jobs back, they went back to the same ways that they did when they left to go to the service. Some came to work for me, and they were faithful. I want to tell you, they helped me grow. We worked, the three of us, Earl, Pete, and myself, for nine years without a vacation. They took double money instead of a vacation, because they were building a house, and they had families. And that includes some Sunday work, some night work. Unbelievable people. I couldn't have done it without

them, I couldn't have done it alone. But they stuck right with me, and like I say, I didn't have to boss them, I never bossed them.

Ms. Stravelli: So how would you do your life over again?

Mr. Dorn: I'd make the same mistakes, sure. I don't think I could improve on it. I don't have any regrets that I can think of.

Ms. Stravelli: That's wonderful, what a blessing to be able to say that.

Mr. Dorn: My folks on my father's side were all missionaries. One of them was a doctor and a missionary in China. His sister was a missionary in China. And my grandmother, my father's mother, was very much involved in the church, helping people. I think I must have inherited it because I like to help people. I like to make people smile. If I can make somebody happy, I'm happy.

Ms. Stravelli: How wonderful. That's the way it's supposed to be.

Mr. Dorn: I don't have any formal religion. I joined the Methodist church because my friend asked me to. And I taught Sunday school for two years, and I wasn't even a member of the church. I did it for my friend. They were stuck for Sunday school teachers. And I got out because it got too commercialized. They started buying workbooks for the children. And they wanted me to learn how to teach with the workbooks and I said, "Goodbye." I said, "I've taught them the Lord's Prayer, I've taught them the Ten Commandments, I've taught them what He expects of us, and that He's real, and that when you pray, you've got to believe that He's listening. I've taught them some basic things, but these workbooks, they're not involved in it at all. You're giving these kids homework. They are going to school and they get homework. And they've got to bring this back next Sunday as homework for me to correct? Bye Bye."

Ms. Stravelli: What would be the best advice you would give today, to a grandchild, or a young person? What would your advice be about how to live your life?

Mr. Dorn: Well, I would say, "Live it." Just take advantage of your opportunities, utilize your talents. If you have a certain talent and can get gainful employment using that talent, you're going to be a happier person. In other words, if you like what you're doing for a living, you're going to be a happy person. Serve others, try not to hurt anybody as you go through, but live it, live it to the fullest. Try to do the things that make you happy, whether it's doing a bungee jump, or jumping in a parachute, or taking a white water trip. Try to accomplish those things in your lifetime, and live it. I don't know what else.

Ms. Stravelli: That's wonderful. That says it all. That's so wonderful.

