Interviewee: Earl Wilson (EW)
Interviewer: Mary Cerulli (MC)
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Transcribed by: Mary Cerulli
Portrait by: Philip Flynn

MC: Ok. Alright, it's July 12th I'm here at the Eastwick Neighborhood Library talking with Earl Williams.

EW: WilSON

MC: Wilson, oh no! Ok there we go this is why we do it.

EW: Don't worry I've been called other things too.

MC: Yeah? Alright. For the Eastwick Oral History Project. My name is Mary Cerulli and I'm here with the Penn Program in Environmental Humanities. So for the record, and for my information too apparently, could you say and then spell your whole name?

EW: Ok, thank you Mary. My name is Earl Wilson. My first name, E-A-R-L, last name W-I-L-S-O-N.

MC: Ok, thank you. So to start off can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and what that was like.

EW: Well, that's a good question. I'm not an original Eastwick resident. I'm a transplant from Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina.

MC: Wow, that's a long way.

EW: Came up, and settled in Eastwick right around 1978. Ok, brought my family with me, raised two boys in Eastwick and have been actively involved in community situations after about the second year in which I moved into Eastwick. I became interested because of the fact that I wanted to make sure that I participated in the kind of environment in which I would like to raise my two sons. And as a result of that, I got involved with the Eastwick PAC, which is a community organization that is supposed to represent the umbrella group for a number of different neighbors, neighborhood community groups, became involved in that and from that point on have been involved in Eastwick to this very day.

MC: Wow, how old were your boys when you moved up here?

EW: They were, when we moved in they were elementary school-age. My oldest was elementary school aged, my youngest age of course was much younger and did not participate in schooling until of the adequate age. But they were active guys and I did as much as I possibly could that they were in an environment that was going to allow for them to be able to grow as kids, enjoy their community, feel safe, and parents feeling safe that the kids were safe as well. And we spent a lot of time talking to, looking out for, and making sure that community was a good for not only our boys but for other kids as well. And I think we succeeded in that over the years. They're grown up now and we are still involved in the community, making sure that those same characteristics that we supposed to allow for a community to be a very positive and interactive community for the safety of the welfare of the, not only the residents but the children as well.

MC: Ok, and so what was it like to move to Eastwick from South Carolina?

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EW: Well when we moved in we did some research before coming into this area and even though we liked Philadelphia, Philadelphia was hte overall key to where we were going to live, we liked Philadelphia but did not like the typical urban setting with the row houses and what have you. And so we wanted to find, because of my background in the South, with a little room for people to grow and move about and not being compact we thought we would find a place where we thought it would be adequate for our kids to have an area within their own borders as far as a home is concerned to be able to grow and to and to have a good time, to enjoy themselves. We wanted to make sure that our kids had room to roam, to live and have a backyard as well as a front yard. And to expand on that, a street where they could possibly feel safe and be able to play ball and all the other things as well. So we looked at the cul de sac situation and we were able to find a spot right in the middle of a cul de sac where we did have the backyard, side entrance, front yard and the street where kids could ride their bikes, big wheels, and all the other things. And that's what we did, and we settled in and my kids had a good time. We made sure that they had a good time.

MC: Were there things that were different from what you expected when you moved? Or what were some of the key differences between Eastwick and what you expected but also where you were coming from?

EW: Well,well we like the progressive characteristics of the community in that there were good people on both sides of us as well as up and down the street and as a matter of fact after moving in one of the things that I thought would be a good thing was for me to organize my block, my cul de sac, ok

MC: Before you even got there?

EW: Well, I was thinking ahead of time.

MC: Yeah?

EW: I want to make sure that if people around me was just say, la la la, we're just gonna hang around, I was going to do as much as possibly could to motivate them by setting an example. And the example I thought was to not only to become involved with the community organization but to bring the people in, my block, and connect them with that community organization. So I became a block captain, from that time up until this very day. I've been doing that. I tried to resign at one point, and then about three or four years later I said no I have to get back into it. But but that's what what we did. Just to make sure that everything in the community and like I said to my wife, I just wanted to make sure that I do as much as I possibly can so that the community will see that there are people who are concerned about what's going on. There are people who want to get others involved in what's going on. And we're doing this because we want others to become a part of this thing as well. You see, and that's that's what community organizing is all about. And we've been involved in that for a long period of time. I've been involved in the block organizing and it's been a good thing. We've got really good friends, don't want to go any place else because what has been established over the years. And even though my guys are older and gone now, we have raised at least, I would say, two to three generations of kids growing up on the block just like my guys, going on to college. You know, coming back with their kiddies, and stuff like that. And we've had a great time. We've really had a great time.

MC: I'm glad. So outside the cul de sac or the front yard, back yard, are there places in the community at large that made it feel like home when you moved here or that were special in some way?

EW: Well the community, from my perspective, it extends beyond because of the fact that I've been extremely active in what's going on. It extends beyond the back yard, front yard, cul de sac thing. My community now includes, over the years, includes the shopping center, the landfill, Friends of Heinz, this library, and things of this nature. We are so involved in making sure that we put in place issues having to do with the complete progression of the community itself. I know you've spoken to Terry, you've spoken to Marge, and all of them and the two that I gave you, all of them have been involved in making sure that through the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition, you might of heard that name, through the Eastwick

Friends & Neighbors we're all members, and we are all deeply involved in connecting through that organization to the city and EPA's case, and you know, dealing the landfill, making sure we solve that issue. And at the same time, expanding on a hundred and thirty five acres that we in a sense forced, we practically forced a multi-million dollar corporation, you might have heard of Korman, to in a sense relinquish, you see because someone gave them the right, fifty years ago, to have first dibs on developing the hudnred and thirty five acres of undeveloped areas in Eastwick. And we didn't like what they did with the shopping center. So, just to cut it short in a sense, we rallied the city, state, and all the so-called power house entities in trying to get Korman to see that it would be to their advantage not to take advantage of that undeveloped area. We also spoke to the city and trying to get the city to understand it would be to the city's advantage to take over. And eventually the city did buy out Korman. So now we are in the process right now of developing that undeveloped area that we're talking about. But I mention that because I just want to make sure that in this perspective that it is, it goes beyond just the personal aspect of someone growing up in the community. It shows in a sense how the likes of people like Terry and Marge, Leonard, Joanne, Ramona, and a couple of others, that we and when get into our meetings we call ourselves the Magnificent Seven, see because we want to make absolutely sure that we reach out and we keep this interactive process going so that in the end and let's hope that there is no end to it. But just for, just to say it, in the end nine times out of ten, we are going to cause our interactive process and the community activism to continue to cause Eastwick to continue to involve to become the kind of city or portion of the city that we can feel proud of. And what we are saying in a sense is that Eastwick, and this is what we talk about sometimes in our meetings, can be a template for the way in which areas within the city can be made whole by some of the, or for some of the people who live in those specific areas. You see we were saddened, and we are still fired up about the fact that years ago the city decided to what they call "develop" this area and that's where Korman came in. They gave Korman the right ot do a whole lot of building and what have you, but it did not meet with a lot of success, at from our vantage point. And as a result of that we are saying we're going to do this again, but we are going to keep in consideration that the city and a lot of the people who represented the city decided that we would have, that they would move out of this area thousands of people, you know, imminent domain. And force them out and said ok you're going to have to leave. And the issue is still a major part of some degree of anxiety and hatred for agencies coming in and doing things in the community without bringing the residents in on the discussion process. And as a result of that, what's happening now, with what we're trying to do, we want to make absolutely sure that it doesn't happen again. You see, and this is the reason why in spite of the fact that I'm sick but I'm still in the middle of all of what's going on because of the fact that we want to make sure that and we remind them all the time that we're not doing what you did last time. And we want to make sure that you do it the right way. And with every step that we make with the development of this area, residents are going to play a major role in the decision making process. We don't have a whole lot of money, however, we are going to make sure that whatever taxpayers dollars going into this thing we're going to be right there fighting for the issues that represents the community itself.

MC: So for that community activism what has been particular issues or particular information that has been really important in getting other people involved - or has really spoken to other people's motivation to get involved?

EW: Well it has not been a major issue. Sometimes we scratch our head and say how is it that the community folks are not coming out. There are meetings sometimes when we called them, you know, we looked, where was everybody, you know. However, we know based on the talks that we have at the shopping center on the corners with different people, we know that the community is watching, see what's going on. We also know that the community folks are interested in how the developing plans are actually happening. So we know that when there's an opportunity for a major meeting, that the residents will be there, you see. But we also think that for the time being, that they are in a position to say, you guys go ahead and do what you have to do, because we know that your track record over the past seven years has been that you're working as hard as possible to make sure that a lot of things that we used to talk about are coming into fruition at this point. And, so we feel comfortable about doing, you know, the kind of work that we're doing at this point.

MC: So what are the things, when you say, things that we, over the track record, things that we talked about, what are some of those key issues, or what are some of the things that are most important to the community?

EW: Okay, there was a time, first of all, let me take you to the landfill, okay. Someone like Leo, would give a lot of information because Leo has been battling that landfill situation for more than thirty years, okay. And as a result of his work and his tenacity and making sure that someone is listening, he and a lot of the other folks and, just recently, were able to get EPA to say okay, fine we're going to look at this situation and we're going to declare this a superfund site. See, I mean, I'm shortening the story in a sense. He would probably be able to give you a little more information on it but once this was declared a superfund site, then we still battle EPA because they have to go through a total federal process. It took years to really get done and accomplish that. And as of 2000, finally, it reached a point where things were documented and the EPA then began to look at how they were going to actually deal with that superfund site, see and from 2000 on it then, you know, began to take action. But the reason why I'm mentioning that to you is because there was a time when residents, people were saying, ah nothing's going to happen, don't worry about it nothing's going to happen, we won't talk, we're not going to any meetings because it's going to be the same old story. Well all of the sudden, they started looking at issues, [baby starts crying] I don't know what this is going to do to the, yeah. But all of a sudden, they start seeing certain things, every once in a while a few folks would come to meetings, and they would take information back and say, hey look these people are getting serious about what's going on at this point, you see. And then recently we worked with the EPA to make absolutely sure that what's was going on at the site, when it was going to have an effect on the residents of the community. Because they are years and years in which residents were saying, too many people are dying from that landfill. Kids were playing up on the top of the landfill and there was no way of stopping them from going up there and they felt as though some of the toxic material was actually causing some harm to certain residents. Well we established a health, safety, and communication workshop to look into that. That particular group was being shared by Dr. Howarth from the University of, that's a university I believe, well we of course we have been unable to establish any concrete connection at this point, but we're still looking into exactly what causes, well, that the cause might be as a result of what's going on. It's kind of tough to track because people have moved in and out and these kinds of things.

MC: Yeah you're looking back now, trying to find the connection.

EW: Yeah, exactly, so what we, so when we look at that and we look at the people in the community they were saying, well the years go nobody was talking about this stuff. You see, now when they come to me they see where people are making an attempt to try to make the connection. Okay, now that is one point, that have actually caused community folks to begin to focus on saying to themselves and as they talk to others, this is something that is being done for this community, because the, then testing causes, ah nothing's going to happen. Actually we have a couple of organizations that, and specialists who actually looked at the process, the testing process, of EPA and in a sense, challenged EPA to look at other ways in which they should carry out their testing process. And in one of the cases, EPA came up and said, well we're going to be testing this, that, and the other, and we're going to be doing test borings for specific areas. And one of the groups that we have working along with the kag, said, it sounds good, but you need to do more testing in these areas rather than doing ten test borings per whatever rectangular shape, you said, you might want to do 15 or 20. Well, and that's sort of like glossing over the entire thing but the fact of the matter is, that particular process, tracking the test *boring process and the forensics of it allowed for the EPA to eventually check toxic material underground, into the backyards of some of the residents who have been living there for 25, 30, 50 years. Well, the EPA then decided that they're going to have to slow down on what they were doing on the landfill and go into the backyards of every resident and remove soil from the backyard and replace the soil from the backyards of residents. Well when that process started, and they started ripping into these backyards and front yards of certain people, they said, oh my god, this thing is really working. You know, something is being done, you see. And so that was one of the things that caused the residents to become more energized. You know, in the past, as I mentioned to you before, in the past they were saying, ah nothing is going to be done don't worry about it. You know. Now they are saying, wow somthing is being done, see? Now, that's one issue. The shopping center, you've seen the shopping

center, you know, that shopping center was almost like a ghost town. It was more than 50% of vacancies in that shopping center, okay. We worked, Farnly, Brown, Jeff Brown, and his organization and another organization teamed up, bought the shopping center from Korman for 20 plus million dollars, and took care of it. And now they are in the process of redoing the entire shopping center, you see. People are coming out now and they're saying, oh my god look at this, there's, ya know, something's going on, you know. And things are happening. So those are two of the main issues, and then we have, we just recently, and then Terry probably might have already given you information on Interface which is that agency or organization that is supposed to be working at re-doing the entire Eastwick area. And we've had numerous meetings in reference to that trying to make absolutely sure that what we do is going to be something that is complementary to what the community wants. ANd we're getting close to a point in now where most of the information and the meetings and the data, we have another meeting coming up soon, but hte data from that is goign to be able to allow us to project from all of the stuff that the data has been collected over a period of months, we eventually be able to look at what we think Eastwick area should look like. We should be able to have like a template as to what we think Eastwick area should look like. And these meetings are attended by a lot of people. We get a lot input from them. So it seems to be working pretty good for the most part.

MC: Ok, alright. So, can you describe the environment, the like green environment in Eastwick and any changes that you've seen since you've here?

EW: Used to be, you know it used to be just coming in to the area, home. Not having to look in different directions to see different things. But now we're reaching a point where a lot of different factors are slowly but surely creeping into the area. I'm saying it that way because I just feel as though that, when you drive into, and this is from a personal standpoint, when you drive into the area, you drive into and you're thinking at the same time 'wow that wasn't there before.' You know, we have an addition to what's going on. The green space, you know, is really being taken care of. Not a problem. The shopping center, the train station, now, I used to walk, I'll be getting back to it as soon as I'm better, but the fact of the matter is as I was walking through Marilonza Boulevard, the Eastwick train station I used to be able to count maybe a dozen, two dozen cars. You know, people going to the train station, now my last count was over two hundred cars using that train station, going in town, and airport, back and forth. So the entire area, there is new life being brought into the entire area. And we think that for the most part the new life that I'm talking about is going to increase exponentially because of the fact that the new life is bringing in new interest, you see. We just feel as though that it's going to be something that is going to be extremely good for Eastwick. We did have, we had a problem with short dumping. We think for the most part when Leonard, who will probably be able to give you some information about that, when Leonard makes a call to the city about someone dumping a whole load of construction stuff or an old boat or an abandoned car, when he picks up the phone to call, they come out. You know, before, three four five years ago, you know it's like make a dozen calls. Now, two or three calls someone is out there cleaning up. The Pepper Middle School, we are going to be working on that, but that used to be a site for short dumping, there used to be all the time, and the board of it, the school district, you know that they would have, that they've got a police force, and you would think that they would be more actively involved in that, but theyre not that active. So we have to make calls, constantly, and that situation is now getting better. We've done a lot different things, you know to make absolutely sure that the situation is getting better all the time. It has not been an easy process, but we're making some in-roads.

MC: What do you think are some of the most important events to the understanding the history of Eastwick and to how the community is the way it is now?

EW: Well if you're thinking about Eastwick's history and events that are a part of the Eastwick history, you can not exclude in any way where Eastwick was about four or five decades ago. You see, you can't, you can't eliminate the blight certification that the city, of course everybody is in denial because whenever that question comes up, they all go 'we don't know how it happened, and we don't how it can be eliminated. But there are two positions, number one, you have to deal with what Eastwick used to be like, ok, and in between, what happened to Eastwick. Now, I've got a general understanding of what Eastwick used to be

like, I didn't live. Terry and his folks lived in this area prior to, and of course he's still here now. But the fact of the matter is, if you think in terms of, even with a general understanding, but if you think in terms of what Eastwick used to be like, there were 40, 40 churches in the Eastwick area. That in itself tells you something about a viable community. 40 churches! They cleared them all out. And now we have about three or four. I mean that's in itself is devastating. You know, there were, this area, from what I understand was the most ethnically involved community in the city of Philadelphia. I mean everybody was here. They owned their own property for the most part, it might not have been like, you know, plots of land on the Main Line, but they owned their own properties. They raised their own chickens, and animals, and their gardens and stuff like that. They had their barbershops, they had their shopping, not so much a shopping center, but they had their areas of businesses and what have you along Eastwick Avenue, you know. It was a very viable community. And then someone came in with the bright idea that, 'oh we're going to make this, we're going to make this into University City, let's do something for it.' And in the process of doing it, they decided with the blight certification first, and then once that was in place, then imminent domain afterwards, and imminent domain in a sense is another way of saying 'you've got to get out, because we're going to do something with this property.' And this is what happened. And people were devastated, as a matter of fact I read in parts of history out of the newspapers, where the sheriff department actually man-handled a number of the community folks because they decided they were not going to leave their homes. Actually, physically moved them out, you see. Now that's that first position, ok. And now we have where we are today. But you can't possibly talk about now if you don't know something about what happened in the past. And this is what we, as the actively involved folks, will say to those powers to be: we're not going back there, you know, and you need to understand the fact that this community is going to demand that it is represented at every step of the way when it comes to evolving, and or improving the community.

MC: How do you feel like that history, the development and everything that comes with it, is connected to the actual land of Eastwick and the way that the environment has changed?

EW: Well you have to, you have to think in terms of, you have to think of terms in of - it's almost like a puzzle, pieces of a puzzle that you're working on. All of these little pieces will have to fit: the land development, the history, knowing what that history is all about, the environmental issues. All of these things have to be fit. And one of these things that we are wrestling with at this point in time, is making absolutely sure that we don't make the mistake of thinking that every piece of land have to have a house or building on it. And fitting that together you have to think of the flood area. FEMA has actually classified this area as a flood zone. Now if you're going to, and this is what frightened off too I think because we really pushed that point hard, this is one of the things that we've always been concerned about. When we fit all these little pieces together, put them together with mother nature in mind, the flood zone you see. Now we're looking at the 135, 127 acres of undeveloped area that is still out there that we're working on now and one of the parts that we are wrestling with because I mean I don't want to use the term too loosely, the fact of the matter is that you don't want it to be all green space, because it's 135 acres, that's a lot of land. You just don't want to just let trees grow, so you going to have to put buildings there somehow somewhere. So what you have to do is make absolutely sure that the highest of the areas is used for buildings you see. Because we know that right now 12 to 13 feet of space in order to protect any building from floods is going to have to be considered if you're going to put houses there. And Korman wanted to put 700 and to be exact 722 apartments in that area. And parking space for over 1100 cars, see you can see that with that asphalt that would definitely, those particular practices would definitely exacerbate the flood conditions, you see. And so we need that area as a buffer for the flood situation, so we drove the point home saying that if Korman is thinking about building homes or apartments in that area knowing how Korman built apartments - everything is on a pad, you know, no consideration at all for elevation and what have you - say if you're going to build 700 apartments, you're going to have to consider the fact that those apartments will have to be elevated 10 to 12 feet in air in order for it to accommodate any possibility of flooding. Korman experienced a flood situation in 1999, Floyd came through and flooded a number of Korman's apartments right across the street there at Maria Lanza Boulevard. Now all those apartments, you don't have to, I mean the first floor is on a pad, I think you know what I'm talking about, it's on a pad. And as a result of that Korman sustained a lot of damage. So you see when Korman came about said 'well we're thinking about building 722 apartments on 127 acres,' we said 'yeah but you have to remember, you have to consider the

flood zone and if you're going to be building anythign in that area, it's going to have to be 10-12 feet above the actual elevation at that point.' I think Korman took that into consideration, and said it wouldn't be financially feasible for them to try to build those homes in that area, so they, and we're thinking that they said 'well hey let's take the money and run.' And so the city was able to help in making the actual change, bought Korman out, and we've been quite happy ever since. But we're talking about building structures, we're talking about the environment, we're talking about the flood situation that's going to have an effect on all of this stuff. So as we're planning, we're thinking ok, we have to find a way to deal with those three issues, with that flood situation in mind. I think we might be able to, I can't wait to see the results of the last meeting we have, but I think we might be able to come up with reasonable accomodation for this area including those three issues, or factors that I mentioned.

MC: Aside from the flooding, or in addition to the flooding really, are there other enviornmental issues that are important to residents and that have affected the community?

EW: Well, I would have to, I would have to say, and I'm going back to the landfill, ok, I would have to say that that is one of the big issues, the landfill. Environmental issues, we have, we're in a, it's almost like being between a rock and a hard place, and the reason I'm saying it that way is because the landfill, well the superfund site, the floods, or a possiblity of floods, and then something that I didn't mention, well a couple other things. Number one, we're in between I-95, cars by the thousands per day, the pollutants and stuff that comes from that, the airport, very concerned about that, and the last of course is the refineries. I mean, Mother Nature has a tendency sometimes for wind to not just blow in one direction alone, you see. So we get a lot of that stuff. And we're always working with the Clean Air Council to monitor what's happening with the refineries. We're working with the airport. There was one time when the airport, they were very happy to go on the news and say 'oh we had a threatened air landing and we had to put out foam on the runway, and etc etc etc.' We are finding out now that the foam that they were using is stuff that can get into the environment and create additional problems in the environment. Now, they just recently developed a new type of foam that is not going to render any negative, as far as the environment is concerned. See but the fact of the matter is, wehn you spray that stuff on the runway it goes down into the drain and eventually finds itself in the water system. That you know, we said 'nuh uh, you can't just continue, you think that you're making progress but in a sense you're really just killing off, or creating harmful situations for people you see.' And you just don't want to do that. Se wethink that airport has made some adjustments with that, I haven't seen anything, of course I've been side-tracked for a period of time, but I haven't seen anything else with it. I know that we were talking to them about it, and I know that they were concerned about it, and they're working with us on a couple of other things including the Pepper Middle School and developing that. Hopefully, we'll try to get that done as well. But the fact of the matter is, is something that we have to consider. These are environmental issues, you know, that we are all very concerned about in this point in time. And we're talking to different people about what's going on. It's not going to happen in a day. But the fact of the matter is that these are issues that will be on the front burner of a lot of people having to do with how their situation in impacting Eastwick. One other area that we've been very concerned about is Eastwick believe it or not is in a valley. That's why we call it the Delaware Valley right. We are also a part of the watershed that we've been concerned about. and this is how we get involved becuase along with Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition, EFNC also has a number of groups, that's why we call it a coalition, because we have the Delaware, the Sierra Club is involved, Delaware River Keepers are involved, Darby Creek Valley Association is involved, and all of these different groups, you know, we were able to as a group reach out and deal with the watershed of this area. Meaning Cobbs Creek, Darby Creek, the Schuykill River, all the different water areas. However, Eastwick sits at the bottom of the watershed. The folks on the upper part of Cobbs, not so much Cobbs Creek, Darby Creek etc., the Schuykill, they're all coming downhill, coming down toward Eastwick. And one of the thigns that we have, Eastwick, ahve reached out to is those communities in the upper part of the area, the watershed. Specifically, we did a couple of workshops, or went to a couple of workshops at, in Pottstown, up then close to Villanova and places like that, the upper part of the watershed. And at one point we found out that the folks at Villanova were planning on building a new dormitory. But in the process of doing it, they did not consider storm water run-off to the extent that it would have an impact on us in the lower part of the watershed. So, they were only concerned about, 'ok we're building we're having the parking lot, we're constructing the parking

lot, and all we want to do is if that water is going to be coming off, coming off snow, coming off and storm water runoff, we just channel to the Schuykill or wherever and that'll be the end of it.' We said no, you can't do that. If you're going to do this kind of work, make sure that you think in terms of trying to stop as much of the water, utilizing that water for whatever, and reducing the amount of storm water run-off so that it will make it a little bit easier for the people who are living downstream. And that, you know, caught the attention of few folks, and eventually they were able to come up with a kind of plan that will reduce the actual storm water run-off going into the Schuykill river that will eventually flow downstream. I think we have a new hotel right up there on Island and Bartram Avenue, and any other new construction going up now have to account for even in Center City, they have to account for storm water run-off. They can't just channel water down the gutter and just say, you know, see ya later, they have to find a way. Now the new hotel has an underground storm water run-off reservoir that they'll actually capture the water and not allow it to flow out into the system right away. And then they use that water for other reasons. But this basically is what the kind of thinking that we in Eastwick are constantly after because we know that it's going to have an impact on us and if not on me right now, the younger folks, my kids and the kids of my friends who eventually live in the area and want to be, you know, to make it a good place to live, you see. So these are the environmental issues that we are always concerned about.

MC: So with those, like with the partnership with the EPA and the Clean Water and Clean Air, and the waters and things like that, there's a lot of data, and science that goes into measuring all that.

EW: Absolutely.

MC: For sure, and so what's the, how does EFNC use that data, or what kinds of data are important to making the change that you want to see with those partnerships?

EW: One of the good things that we have, is the fact that my background is in science. And we're always, always, alert for stuff like that. We've got a couple of, we've got a number of the Sierra Club for instance, they are definitely, they're like Delaware River Keepers, Darby Creek Valley Association, they have a number of people serving that are involved in, and as a matter of fact I'm on the board for Delaware Valley. And the Darby Creek and the fact is that they have good friend of mine, as a matter of fact, who is really an environmentalist. And spends a lot of time with and dealing with and talking about issues having to do with the data that we're talking about. I mentioned to you early on the fact is that we were able to look at data that EPA was presenting to us, and we had enough experts in the area to say, 'No it's not going to work - Let's look at it a different way.' And fortunately we were able to turn EPA around on a number of issues, you know, that's going to benefit the community. And one such issue, one such issue is we, as we were planning for the completion of the term ROD, record of decision, that EPA put out to, which was a guideline to tell us exactly how that landfill is supposed to be taken care of with the ET cover. As a result of that, we were able to get specific information having to do with the environment, the data and stuff of that nature. And I just hope that, that that information is going to be extremely valuable.

MC: Can you tell me, can I backtrack a little bit, and can you just give me a personal timeline with your background in science and what you've done in addition to all your community organzing?

EW: Well, I've been, I don't like to talk about me.

MC: Yeah, I know that's why I snuck it in there at the end.

EW: Mhmm [laughs]. Let me get my thoughts together.

MC: Just what you would like to share.

EW: I've always been somebody who loves science. Even as a kid coming up through grade school, and I came up with it, came out of high school with a very good science background. Even though it was down South. And went on to college and graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science degree. But the thing that really got to me was the fact that, science is a lifelong thing as far as I'm concerned. So much so as a matter of fact until I've taught science for over forty years you know as a school teacher. And would be teaching science right today if I wasn't ill. Because usually, when I retired, I thought to myself, 'I said I've got all this background and stuff and it seems like such a shame to lay back on my couch and just - ' so I eventually got involved with volunteering at a church for what we call a science & technology summer camp and I do the science part of it. I can't do it this year. But this was supposed to be something that I was going to do for a friend. He said 'why don't you spend some time working with the kids,' I always liked working with kids. And so he said, just do it for a year and see how it's going to be. Well it's been four years now that I've been doing this thing. I just thought that science is always a good thing. It's always new stuff coming out and something that I like to do. So I just like being involved in what's going on in science. And this is why I am as involved as I am in the community. Because a lot of it has to do with science, you know. And it's always something interesting to talk about, to get involved in, and to do what we can that things look better for everybody.

MC: Alright. So, the other the two interviews I did were at Heinz and I know we stopped by there on our tour. So you can tell me a little bit about what your relationship with John Heinz refuge has been?

EW: The areas that we, uh huh, well - I would have to say, put it this way: we don't, there isn't enough interest at this point, now maybe I don't want to use the word interest, awareness, of what Heinz is all about. And the other part of it is participation, getting involved in what's going on. I don't think that, I don't think that, there's a lot, I'm thinking about the kids that I've been working with now for the last, during the summer, for the last four years. It's one of the local churches, and of course I'm teaching them science. And one day I just asked them, I asked them, 'How many of you have ever been to John Heinz refuge?' And one or two hands popped up. I said 'ok, let me see what I can do.' So I went over to Heinz, spoke to the people, they had a couple of environmentalists over there. And I said, 'there are kids that I am teaching now who would be more than happy to become a part of the program.' You know, and it ended up where they are scheduled now to go to Heinz on a regular basis as a part of their science technology program. So I just have to say that people in the community, and the reason I brought that up with the kids, I'm using the kids as a way to get the adults involved in Heinz. And I was glad to see about two weeks ago I was over there, just walking through there, doing some work over there right now, but just walking through. And I saw dads, and kids, not a whole lot but it was much much better than what it used to be. So I'm hoping that it's catching on now, to the point where the community people know that that is a community jewl for everybody. You know, just drive into the park, right now Lamar who is the director or the manager over there, he said that they are building an additional parking space for people coming in. So that tells you right there that the attendance rate is increasing. And I'm hoping that it is as a result of community people getting involved in what's going on. You go in, and you park, and you've got all of this space to just walk and quiet, you don't hear any cars. Mother Nature, the trees, the water, you know it's just unbelievable. You don't have to pay anything, go and take a break. Get out of that hot house and go in and enjoy yourself. That's for them to be able to enjoy nature, and they should. So these are issues that it's all for the community. You don't need to just drive into the community, stop at your house, there are other things that you can do. I'm hoping that they will make the shopping center, I mean every time you go to the shopping center you're thinking money, but the fact of the matter is, it's another place to go to. ShopRite is supposed to be having an entertainment program over there on a regular basis, you know. I mean this is the stuff that we have been working with, trying to get done. We go to these meetings, everyone doesn't have to go to the meetings, but keep up with what's going on so that eventually you'll be able to enjoy some of the good things that is being put in place for you. And you don't have to put any place else, go right here. Stay in your community. Mhm.

MC: Well I'm running to the end of my questions, but do have anything that you would want to add, anything that you think is important that we haven't talked about, or just some final things that you would want to say?

EW: I don't know, maybe a thought will come up a little later on.

MC: Okay.

EW: This is not the last of this. I'm pretty sure that you know there are some things that will probably come along later on that I'll think about. Even if when we get into the editing process we can add some things to what's going on.

MC: Okay, alright. Well thank you so much for making the time and for sharing so much.

EW: I'm just hoping that the information that you can get is going to work out very well for the project. We'll see what gives.

MC: Yeah well I'm optimistic.

EW: [Laughs] Yes indeed.