

**INTERVIEW WITH  
HADLEY PIHL  
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Sloan Oral History Series**

H: Hadley

G: George

*[Note: This is a telephone interview.]*

G: This is George Roth interviewing Mr. Pihl. We are here to talk about EP Brooks, the first dean of the Sloan School, but also very influential in Course 15 management program at MIT. Mr. Pihl, if I may ask, I know our interview is about EP Brooks, but I'd like to ask you a little bit about your background, education, and career, if I may.

H: OK. First of all, my name is Hadley C. Pihl. I'm married to Carol Brooks Pihl, who was EP Brooks' second daughter. We were married in October 1950. I went to St. Mark's School in Southboro, Class of '44. Then I went into the Navy. The Navy sent me into a B-12 program because in those days I tested well. After the war they let me go, and I finished up at Harvard, where I'd planned to go all the time. I was Class of '47 at Harvard.

I took a year at medical school and found that I did not like it. My good friend, Brad Endicott, his father was a director at Sears, and he suggested that Sears would be a good place to get my basis, so he helped me get started in the Sears training program in fall of 1948.

In January 1949, I was skiing at Stowe, Vermont, with one of my classmates, Fen Lewis and he told a wonderful story about working with the Hasty Pudding show at Harvard. When they came out to the Chicago area, his dad, who had gone to MIT with Carol's dad, called to see if they could help put up 19 boys. Carol's mother put them all up around in Hinsdale here, and not only that, arranged for them to attend the golf club dance. So Fen was very, very impressed with the family and said, "When you go back to Chicago, you've got to look them up." The problem was that I found that that EPB was the vice president at Sears, Roebuck.

I laid back for a year before I gathered courage and in the early spring of 1950, I called up and talked with this delightful gal, and we arranged to meet at the University Club Women's waiting room. I told her that I'd wear a tan suit and a red bow tie. I walked in, she stood up and we walked out. That was about late March or April of 1950. We weren't engaged until July 4<sup>th</sup> 1950, which was of great concern to Carol's dad because this young whippersnapper was coming into the family.

G: So you were engaged then in a couple of months!

H: Yeah. Everything worked. I grew up in New England, and Carol had spent a great deal of time in New England with her grandparents in Prout's Neck, and we had so much in common. She had gone to the same small girl's school in Lowell, MA that my mother had gone to Rogers Hall. As a matter of fact, we sent our own daughter there years later. Everything clicked really. It's almost 62 years now.

G: And it's still clicking.

H: So far, it's worked pretty well.

G: Congratulations on that!

H: My good friend, Brad Endicott, who was a classmate of mine at St. Mark's, his dad was, as I told you, a director at Sears. He had been pushing to get me as a son-in-law, unsuccessfully. But he was very, very helpful in persuading EP Brooks that I was OK.

G: Wonderful!

H: We were married October 5, 1950. The interesting thing is the MIT connection I have through my friend Fen Lewis and his dad, who went to MIT, along with Carol's dad. So in some ways, without MIT I wouldn't be married to Carol.

Anyway, when we were married, I offered to leave Sears and Carol's dad said, "Oh, I work with the factories, nobody knows me. Don't worry about it." Actually it solved the problem of any conflict of interest because in the spring of 1951, he left for MIT.

G: OK. Maybe you could tell me your first meeting with him. I'm interested in his character, as well as his priorities or philosophy when he came to MIT. But I'm guessing that the character piece has been consistent, whether it was at Sears or at MIT.

H: Most of my relationship in the early days was with Carol's mother. My mother always told me that if you want to know what a girl is going to look like as she grows older, look at her mother. I've got to tell you that I fell in love with Carol Wright Brooks. She was one of the loveliest ladies I've ever met in my life, and boy, she really was a lot of fun.

Carol's dad—I did not really have too many one-on-one conversations with him. We had a brief conversation about personal finances, and I explained that I had started investing, buying stock, when I was not quite 16. My mother was the person in our family who did the financial work, and her dad had worked for AT&T in Lowell. I bought five warrants from her to buy five shares of AT&T in the fall of 1941. So I was not quite 16 then, but I had a little stock in my portfolio, not too much.

G: He wanted to be sure you were thinking and had the means to care for his daughter.

H: Oh yes. Frankly, he treated me as well as he did anybody in the family. I respected him very much, and I was careful not to get into a big argument with him. It was very, very obvious he was very, very smart.

G: What did you have to do to be sure you didn't get into a big argument with him?

H: Make sure my facts were completely correct. As an example, I was driving back with him along an Illinois highway, and the wires on the telephone posts have these wonderful arcs. I said, "Aren't those catenary arcs very attractive as you look at them?"

He said, "What do you mean they're catenary?"

I said, "Well, that's what they're called." Apparently he'd never heard the word catenary.

G: Well, I am one who has never heard that word either!

H: It's a description of the arc of a heavy wire between two poles. He'd never heard of it, and he couldn't wait until he got home to get to a dictionary to make sure that I was right! (laughing)

Another time, we went down to visit a fertilizer plant. Carol's mother's family owned a barge company, and we went down to visit a fertilizer plant that was using their liquid nitrogen. As we approached, there was a dense reddish brown smoke coming out of the smokestack. I said, "Gee, look at that nitrogen oxide."

He said, "How do you know that's nitrogen?"

I said, "Well, I studied chemistry!" (laughing) I'm not sure if my memory is right but whatever gas I named, it was correct, because he couldn't wait to get inside and ask them what the gas was.

One time I decided I would try to get a little ahead of him. I read up on making Persian rugs. Then, very casually, down in his little bedroom study at the farm, I brought up the subject of Persian rugs and knot tying and things like that. Before I knew it, he had one of the little rugs from the floor up over his knee, explaining to me the intricacies of Persian knot tying. I said to myself, "Oh boy! I'm not going to try this again." (laughing)

G: So in this case, you found an area that he was knowledgeable on, and he wanted to expound on that.

H: Yes, but I didn't know he knew so much about Persian rugs! I thought this would be a subject he didn't know anything about. I said, "I'm going to give up trying to get ahead of him." But we always had very, very good relationships. As I say, I was always very respectful of his knowledge and breadth of interests and understanding.

G: So can you tell me a little bit more about how he came to that? I'm guessing there are some things he learned in school, but obviously to have a broad knowledge and breadth of understanding, it is more than what you learn in college or university.

H: Right. I would like to tell you some of his favorite stories he used to tell us. To me, it illustrates his thinking outside the box.

G: Oh! Those would be wonderful!

H: To come up with what people in engineering call an "elegant solution." Simple, but effective. When he was working on his grandfather Penal's farm (his mother's maiden name was Penal.)

G: Where was that farm?

H: It was in Maine, probably it was not very far from Westbrook, Maine.

G: I had no idea. So he grew up in Maine?

H: Yes. The original name of the town was Sacarapa and he always resented that it had been changed to Westbrook, just outside of Portland, Maine.

G: I'm actually calling you from Saco, Maine, so I'm right in that area.

H: Oh! My stepmother had a home in Saco, right along the river, so I know the area very well.

When he was working on the farm, he must have been a young teenager, but he found that the men were using little lead pellets to put into a weighing device. It was a very cumbersome thing for them to feed in one-by-one, and they sometimes dropped them. He invented a heavy paper funnel to make it easy to go in. The men had never thought of anything like that and they were very, very impressed. But to me, this is one of the... He loved to tell the story about how he made it easy for the men to do something they had been doing very hard for many, many years. He simplified the whole thing, and he was very, very proud of that.

Another (from my viewpoint) thinking outside the box was after WWI, which he called "his war". He stayed in France to study at the Sorbonne for about a year, which to me was really thinking outside the box in those days for most young people at that age; he would have been 23-24 years old.

When he came back, another wonderful story he loved to tell about was inventing a position at a bank to take advantage of his knowledge. I think at that time he was squiring Carol Wright in New York City, so he went to a NY bank. I think he wanted to be in that area. This is my supposition of course. He talked the bank into using him to go out and investigate people who wanted to borrow money from them. He talked them into the fact that having what he called "possible reconnaissance" would pay off for the banks. So he really invented a position.

G: It sounds to me like it might be something from the war experience as well, from the reconnaissance that was done there.

H: Yes. Apparently that worked out pretty well. Then around 1922-23, Joe Wood contacted him from Montgomery Ward. In those days, General Robert E. Wood worked at Montgomery Ward, and Dad Brooks went to Chicago to work at Montgomery Ward.

Just to back up a little. As I recall, the CEO at Montgomery Ward in those days was a very mean guy by the name of Marcellus, and he was not brilliant like General Wood. Somewhere around 1923, he fired General Wood. The General had worked with my friend's father, H. Wendell Endicott. You probably know him from Endicott House.

G: Oh yes! Of course! That's the name that came up right away.

H: Yes, his father developed Endicott-Johnson. Anyway, Mr. Endicott had worked for General Wood during WWI in the Quartermaster Corps, specializing in shoes, and they had become good friends. So when the General was fired from Montgomery Ward, H. Wendell Endicott went to his father-in-law, C.W. Barron who founded the *Wall Street Journal*.

Together, they held the news until Mr. Endicott could go to his friend, Julius Rosenwald at Sears and arrange for the General to come to Sears.

So the General was at Sears and a couple of years later he called and recruited Dad Brooks to leave Wards and come to Sears.

G: OK. I was wondering how he made that transition.

H: Yes, he had apparently made a big impression on the General, who was a brilliant guy himself. I would say he came to Sears, Roebuck somewhere around 1925-26.

He was working as the supervisor of a small group of Sears stores in Wisconsin, when US Steel recruited him around 1933 to come to Pittsburgh as a potential future treasurer of US Steel. Apparently they were very impressed after reading about his career at the bank and being at MIT and things like that.

So he left Sears in 1933 to go to Pittsburgh with US Steel. When he got there, he found they had really misjudged his career in banking. They thought he had much more experience in financial work than he really had, and he said, "They were very nice. They were going to stand by him. But it was obvious that he would never become treasurer of US Steel." So after a year or so, he contacted General Wood and asked if he could come back to Sears, and the General brought him back to Sears. That would have been somewhere around 1934-5. I don't know how long he was in Pittsburgh. I know he never sold their home in Hinsdale, so it wasn't a permanent move in his mind.

Anyway, he was installed as the head of the radio-buying department at Sears. And here is one of his new, wonderful stories about him developing what he called "The Election Special." Sears did not make everything. I think they were working with Sylvania in Rochester, NY. But he did something that was, here again, completely out of the box. He put the best engineers to work on the lowest-priced radio, to get the best low-priced radio possible. Then working with a friend here in Hinsdale who was a designer, they worked out a new plastic cover. In those days, plastic was fairly new.

G: Yeah, it was that Bakelite material.

H: Right. They devised a unique color, and instead of putting it on so the back was open, they put it on like a hat, so that only the bottom was open. And it turned out to be a roaring success. I sometimes teased him about him helping elect Roosevelt for the second time! (laughing) But it was a fantastic success. My wife still remembers how good that little radio was. He called it, "The Election Special." To me, this is a wonderful example of him thinking out of the box and coming up with something that really was an elegant solution.

His success there put him in a position to be promoted in 1939 to head up the factory division at Sears, Roebuck, which made him a vice president and director at Sears.

G: Where was that factory?

H: For many years, good companies would not sell Sears, Roebuck. They regarded them as a déclassé retailer. So Sears bought up all of these little factories to make stuff, one thing after the other. They even had a division that made houses! For instance, I think they owned about 25% in the washing machine business, which was then called 1900 in Benton Harbor. They owned or held a controlling interest in one company after another. I think he spent a lot of time divesting Sears, because by 1939 Sears had become what you'd call "legitimate." So he was very successful there.

In 1945, his good friend Tom Kearney, of AT Kearney and Company, here in Chicago went to China with the Chinese War Production Board. I don't know how long he spent in China, maybe six months. He flew in over the hump and he loved to tell stories about sleeping on the floor and having the rats nibble at him and things like that. (laughing)

G: And soon after this time is when you would have first met him.

H: This was 1945, so I didn't meet him until 1950.

G: Right. I was thinking five years was relatively soon in his overall career.

H: Right. Then about 1950 Alfred P. Sloan gave MIT what? \$8 million as I recall, to start up a business school. The school went to the alumni asking for suggestions, and he literally wrote a business plan.

G: So EP Brooks sent in a business plan at a request that came from the school?

H: They asked for suggestions, and he wrote what you would call a business plan. In the spring of 1951, they requested that he come and put it into effect.

G: I had no idea that's how that happened. There's his thinking outside the box again!

H: Oh yes! And he was in a difficult situation at Sears because he had left Sears in 1933, and this was 1951, so he had not put in the required 20 years for retirement. But the General was so fond of him that they arranged for him to get retirement pay from Sears.

G: Wonderful!

H: He had these wonderful people who thought a great deal of him and helped him along the way.

Another side point, in the late 1920s, he financed his home here in Hinsdale by borrowing on his Sears stock. When the Depression came, boom, he was in bad shape because Sears stock went to almost nothing. Julius Rosenwald thought so much of him, he personally helped EP Brooks out of his financial hole. So he was very well respected by the people for whom he worked.

G: And obviously well respected by Alfred Sloan, the preeminent industrialist of the time.

H: I never heard him talk about Alfred Sloan. Incidentally, I got so curious about what the P stood for, I looked it up. It's Pritchard. Alfred Pritchard Sloan.

G: Ah, OK. I never knew that.

H: I'd heard Alfred P. Sloan for 50 or 60 years, and I never knew what the P stood for. So I looked it up and it's Pritchard. I just thought you'd like to know!

G: Thank you, yes. I never had thought about that. It's never Alfred Sloan, it's always Alfred P. Sloan. Never more than that.

So you were meeting him at the time this was all going on.

H: We were married October 5, 1950. In December we found that Carol was pregnant. And boy! Talk about a happy fellow, he was. She was the first of his children to be married.

G: So the first grandchild was coming.

H: Yes. He was one happy, tickled gentleman, let me tell you! He couldn't have been nicer.

G: At that time you lived in Chicago, and he was called to move to Boston.

H: No, Carol and I lived in a little garage apartment in Hinsdale. I actually married into this nice village of Hinsdale. I don't know if you know it, but it's a very nice, upscale suburb of Chicago. As I understand the family lore, he and Mom Brooks, whom everybody called Gemma, had tried living on the North Shore, but they found that was too fancy; they loved Hinsdale because they had a lot of riding trails here and he loved to ride horseback. He rode horseback every Sunday for many, many years with a small group. He loved it.

From my viewpoint, he was always reading, studying, analyzing things. I feel that what he wanted to get into the MIT curriculum was the concept to give students the skills and tools and knowledge to examine problems in a new and better way. I think I have read parts of his summary, but this goes back 50 years. I don't really remember. But from my recall, many of his concepts, which he introduced in 1951, are still being used at MIT—to his great credit.

G: He certainly had a big influence on the development of the program there. My understanding was that he did an annual lecture that was very well received.

H: I wouldn't be surprised, yes. He was very smart, well-read, and broadly knowledgeable. His example of Persian rugs! (laughing)

G: So you've just gotten married. You've just announced that you're about to have a child, his first grandchild. Then within a couple of months, around 1951, he moves to Boston.

H: Yes, he moved to Boston in the spring of 1951. Carol's mother moved in late May or June, after they sold their house here.

G: This time they did sell the house? You said before they hadn't when he went to US Steel.

H: No, this was permanent. They moved into an old brownstone on Beacon Street, 352 Beacon Street. It was a wonderful location because he would walk across... As I recall, MIT bought the old Lever Building.

G: Well, Alfred P. Sloan bought that for MIT, in addition to giving money to start the school.

H: Oh, OK.

G: And yes, that was the old Lever Brothers headquarters.

H: He used to walk to work and he just loved it. It worked out very well. Carol's mother was devastated because here she had her first pregnant daughter, and then August 29 of 1951 we had twins, a boy and a girl.

G: Oh my!

H: Carol's mother spent so much time on the telephone that Carol's dad just put down the law. "You can't spend that much time on long distance."

G: It was very expensive then, wasn't it?

H: Oh yes! So after that, Carol would hear blink, blink, blink. Carol's mother was calling from a pay station! (laughing) So she outsmarted him!

It was a wonderful time, and it was busy. We had to buy a small fixer-upper house. But because I had stock in Sears and other things, I thought it was cheaper to borrow money against my shares. Working at Sears, there was a Sears Bank and Trust Company so there was no problem borrowing money on Sears stock, believe me! So our first house was \$17,500, which by today's standards is peanuts, but that's what it was then. But when Carol's dad found out what I had done (and I had not known about his problem) he just blew up. He said, "You can't DO that." (angry sounding) He insisted I borrow money from him against my signature to close out the bank because he had had such a disastrous experience himself.

G: Yes. Such a painful memory.

H: Yeah, it was very, very painful. He gave me no choice. He said, "You're going to do this."

G: But he had Mr. Rosenwald who helped him and I'm guessing that he wanted to return that generosity.



H: Yes. In those days he was divesting his Sears stock to the family; one Christmas instead of getting Sears stock, he just forgave my loan.

G: Very generous.

H: Along with brother Bob, I was co-executor of his estate and he did not die a wealthy man. He had given so much away.

G: We should all be so fortunate.

H: Not only to the family. Another example of his thinking outside of the box was one of the fabulous senior lawyers at Ropes & Gray, the famous law firm in Boston. Jack Richardson talked Carol's dad into the concept of developing educational trusts for grandchildren. So he worked with people to do something creative and much better. He created these educational trusts for his grandchildren, all seven of them. And I have to tell you, it worked beautifully. At that time of our lives, parents were too busy with their kids to get into financing and thinking about that kind of stuff 20 years down the road. But he did that, and it was a big help to us, let me tell you. We had our kids in private schools and then they both went to private colleges.

Oh! I have to tell you a wonderful story! Our son selected to go to Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. It's a very fine, small college. But Carol's dad really did not know much about this, and he was not happy about his oldest grandson going to this little podunk college in northern Wisconsin. It was obvious he was not happy, until *babelais dictu* he found that the President of MIT had sent his son to Lawrence! All of a sudden everything was OK.

G: Which president was that, who sent his son there?

H: Oh gee, I can't remember.

G: Maybe Howard Johnson?

H: No, that would have been before Howard Johnson. He hired Howard Johnson to work with him as his assistant.

G: Then he went on to be dean and then President of MIT.

H: Yeah. Howard also wrote a favorable book about himself. Some of the members of the family think that Howard sort of overdid some of the credits for himself, but that's OK.

G: Can you remember some of his stories from MIT? I'm presuming you might have gotten together over holidays, or maybe in the summer, after they moved to Boston? How did that work?

H: The thing I remember most is his agony about running into what is called tenure. In the business world there is no such thing as tenure. He ran into people at MIT who were working at the school, whom I think he regarded as completely incompetent. But he couldn't do anything about it because they were tenured. That really bothered him.

G: Right. You're very constrained in how you can influence people when you don't have the ability to fire or demote them.

H: He didn't talk to me too much. See, I didn't go to MIT. I was from that little school up the river. (laughing)

G: Much of the founding of the Sloan School was very much oriented to doing something different than Harvard, for a number of reasons.

H: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, Dean Don David at Harvard Business School offered him all of the coursework. I think they used case studies at Harvard.

G: Yes.

H: He offered Dad Brooks all his stuff if he wanted. And Dad Brooks turned him down flat. He wanted to approach things in a different way. And I have to tell you, from my viewpoint, I think he was correct. I have a great deal of respect for him.

G: And in many ways, the schools at MIT and Carnegie and Stanford and a couple of other top schools developed very differently from Harvard. That was based on much more of a disciplined approach in terms of academic disciplines informing management, rather than just practice.

H: Right.

G: In some ways I think that would be a challenge for him because his real knowledge was based on management practice and not disciplines like sociology or psychology or social psychology.

H: Yes. I think he was very interested in making sure that the students coming out of the School of Management at MIT had the tools to do the analytical approach to things, to enable them to come up with what he would consider an out-of-the-box solution; a novel, clever, better way of doing things. Going back and thinking about all of this, I would say that was one of the things that motivated him to put so much creative energy into passing on his ideas to MIT about this.

G: Well, he was there at a wonderful time too.

H: In all fairness to MIT, I think they recognized this creative genius at work and they picked up on it. As you know, he picked Howard Johnson, who was a very smart, very bright, sociable individual. I met him several times down at Sanibel when Dad Brooks was there.

Both he and his wife were lovely people. Howard not only went on to succeed Dad Brooks at the Sloan School, but to become head of the whole MIT.

G: The President of MIT, that's right.

H: Yes. Some members of the family think Howard embellished some of his ideas a little in his book, but I don't think you can take anything away from Dad Brooks.

G: I've heard he also really enjoyed fishing. Is that true?

H: Oh! Yes, he did! He loved fishing. He loved trout fishing. They belonged to a small club here, Coleman Lake Club, in northern Wisconsin. I never got up there myself, but Carol loved to go up there. He also loved to go salmon fishing in Quebec and New Brunswick. I don't know if you've ever done any salmon fishing but I have, and it's probably the most exciting sport going!

G: No, I haven't. I've done trout fishing but it was many years ago.

H: With salmon you use a heavy fly rod, nigh to 11 oz. when you're using a fly. So when you hook onto a 25-30 pound salmon, you have to fight him for almost an hour to get him in. It's exciting work! To me, it's even more exciting than deep-sea fishing.

G: Well, it's more of an art with the fly.

H: Yes. He loved salmon fishing, and tried to get away every year to do some of that. I never personally fished with him. My friend's father, Wendell Endicott, took Brad and me fishing. He belonged to a club up on the Boise River, which is in the north side of the St. Lawrence, where I was introduced to salmon fishing. And also on the Western... His roommate at Harvard was Jack Strauss, whose family owned Macy's. They still had their cottage on the river, and that's where I was introduced to salmon fishing. It's a fantastic sport. You have to be fairly wealthy to do it, but that's all right.

Let me go through some of my notes here and make sure that I haven't skipped anything.

G: Please do.

H: Oh! I always joke about my wonderful father-in-law. He was so good about planning ahead five, ten, fifteen years, but he was absolutely no good about trying to figure out what to have for supper! (laughing) He was marvelous from that viewpoint.

G: So how would he do supper?

H: He always had somebody to...

G: But he didn't make plans. It was just whatever it was.

H: To back up. In 1945, they bought this beautiful piece of property in the western part of Virginia, not too far from the homestead, if you're familiar with that outfit. They hired a local architect from Hinsdale by the name of Chubb Pilquist, who is well-known out here, to design a home to put up on top of the hill overlooking the pastures of the river. It was a beautiful place. In 1971, after Dad Brooks had retired from being Dean at the Sloan School, they decided to move completely from Boston down to the farm. They moved permanently in January 1971 to Middleboro, Virginia, to their farm, which he called Buxton, which had been the name of his grandfather's farm.

Unfortunately on April 1, 1971, Carol's mother was operated on and they found she had inoperable cancer. I think she was operated on at MGH and Dad Brooks flew her back down to Virginia and she lived the last few months down in Virginia. We took turns going to visit her, and she died in August 1971. So for 20 years, he was there by himself.

G: And that's where he stayed, in Middleboro, Virginia.

H: Yes, it's a lovely place. He raised his son, Bob, to take over the place. In a way he was sort of a male chauvinist. He wanted to make sure that the farm went down in the Brook's name. (laughing)

Unfortunately, our wonderful brother-in-law died of cancer, along with his wife, several years ago. So their children are now trying to run it, which is a pretty tough job for them.

G: How many children were there? I know you've mentioned your wife and then Beverly and then the son Bob?

H: OK. Beverly was born in 1923; Carol was born in 1925; Bob I think was born in 1929.

G: So it was the three.

H: We had two children, a boy and girl.

Beverly had two boys. She married Carl Frederick Flow of MIT in 1954 and they had two boys, Charles Kettle Flow, born in 1955 and Jonathan Tintle Flow born in 1956. Jonathan still lives in the Boston area, in Belmont.

Bob, the son, had three children: Richard, David, and Kathryn. Bob and Pat were married in November 1951.

G: Right after you.

H: Yeah, just a year after us. We were always very close with Bob and Pat. Bob worked for Whirlpool, so they were 90 miles from us. We spent a lot of time together for holidays, etc.

G: You were looking at your notes to see if there was something else that you might want to share.

H: Just so you know, my understanding from his comments at MIT in his senior year, he was really involved in student activist groups to get the US into WWI. He enlisted in the spring of 1917 to go into the Army. He did not technically graduate from MIT.

G: Oh, I didn't realize that.

H: Yes. MIT gave the boys who were enlisted their diplomas. They were a couple of months short, but technically, just for the record.

G: Right, so he has his degree, but he wasn't there to graduate.

H: Correct. He was fighting. He was, of course in the engineers in the Army. I think he was First Lieutenant. At one spot he was involved in capturing quite a few Germans. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, for which he was very proud.

G: That is quite an honor.

H: He was a courageous guy. Very bright. He had his own ideas about things. He was always reading, no matter where he was. He'd send away for books or buy them. When I was down at the farm, he would send me over to the Homestead to buy the *NY Times* so he could catch up on all the recent books. He'd buy them. His reading was voluminous.

G: Right. You commented on how broad his knowledge was.

H: And he remembered what he read, and he was a fascinating conversationalist. I had a great deal of respect for him.

G: May I ask you a couple questions?

H: Of course!

G: What happened between 1959 and 1971 when he stepped down as Dean and was still in the Boston area, before he moved to Virginia? I don't know much about that part of his life.

H: I never knew the exact date he stepped down from MIT. You say it was 1959?

G: As Dean, yes.

H: OK.

G: So I'm guessing he was there in an educator capacity.

H: He stayed in Boston for another ten years. As far as I know he kept up his interests in business. I think he was on the board of a couple companies. American Optical, if I

remember correctly. They were in western Massachusetts; I've forgotten the name of the town. He was involved with the family barge company. Let me go back.

His father-in-law, Frank C. Wright, had been a railroad man and apparently done very well in railroads. When Shell Oil Company wanted to develop an interstate barge company, they found being a foreign company it was against the law for them to own interstate vehicles. So they worked with Grandfather Wright to develop a barge company to go up and down the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Atlantic, along the inter-coastal waterways, and also on Lake Michigan. And with a company like Shell guaranteeing the contracts, there was no problem borrowing money to buy equipment. So they built it into a fairly good sized company called... the last name I think was National Marine, but there were several names.

Anyway, Carol's uncle, he was the youngest of the Wright family, he was only about seven years older than we are, who incidentally had gone to MIT. He was running the company, but Dad Brooks was one of the directors, so he was very involved in that company. He pushed Dave to do something to make it more liquid for the family. So he spent a great deal of time in St. Louis working with what was eventually named National Marine. At one time they were thinking of merging it with Marathon Oil. Eventually, Uncle Dave merged it—basically it was a takeover—by Nicor, the gas company here in Illinois, who wanted to get into offshore supply work in the Gulf of Mexico. They paid a handsome price for the company. In preparation for that, Carol's dad, who had inherited his share of all of these National Marine shares from his wife who was deceased, divided them up among his three children with the stipulation that they would contribute to the EP Brooks Foundation at MIT.

G: That was the other question I was going to ask you. You mentioned he didn't die wealthy because he had given his money away. I was wondering what his priorities and values were in that.

H: I think his priorities would be MIT and family, to summarize it. I wouldn't say that is all-inclusive, but I think that was his major interest.

G: MIT being the major organization he was passionate about supporting.

H: Oh yes, yes. This is typical of him. Before he gave the shares to his children, he got the government to agree on a low price for National Marine so it wouldn't be as much gift tax. (chuckling) He really thought things out. And in all fairness, he had very good legal counsel from Ropes & Gray with Jack Richardson. My guess is Mr. Richardson is long since gone, but I regarded him very favorably. We were so impressed with his concept of educational trust that when our grandchildren were born, we started educational trusts for them. And, I tell you, it worked beautifully. We finally had to cut them off when they hit about \$400,000. It not only put them through college, but it gave them something for buying a house and that kind of stuff.

By the end of this year we're going to have six great-grandchildren, so I'm nudging each of our children to start an educational trust for them. I'm nudging them with a gift of \$20,000 for each great grandchild coming up to get going.

G: To have them set up, that's wonderful.

H: So this will be the third generation of this concept of educational trusts, all coming from Dad Brooks.

G: Great!

H: The point I'm trying to make is he came up with these wonderful, long-term concepts that work very well.

G: Yes, and he thought about things that way, and thought them through and had a broad horizon. I have two more questions.

H: Yes, sir.

G: I don't know who Bill Griffiths is, and I know you...

H: Bill Griffiths is the son of Findlay Griffiths. When Dad Brooks went to US Steel, there was a young fellow by the name of Finn Griffiths working there as a salesman. Finn Griffiths became a protégé of Dad Brooks. The story I heard was that one year Finn Griffiths had had a good year selling steel—this must have been around 1934. Dad Brooks asked him if US Steel had to give him a bonus or extra, and Finn had said, no, they didn't recognize him at all for his wonderful salesmanship. Dad Brooks said, "Get out of there." And Finn did! He went on to other steel companies and he ended up being a President of Interlake Steel Company here in this area. Bill Griffiths is one of his sons.

G: I see. So that's the connection.

H: Findlay Griffiths and Dad Brooks were lifelong friends. The Griffiths family lived here in Hinsdale.

G: I was wondering what that connection was.

H: We're still in contact. His two daughters were babysitters for our children. And I think Bill went to the Sloan School.

G: Well, he was the connection who wrote to Alan White, one of our Associate Deans, and suggested I get in touch with you. I was wondering about that connection. Thank you.

H: Yes, that's the connection.

Jeannie Griffiths, their oldest daughter, we talk with her every other day. She lives a mile away from us. So it's been a very close relationship.

G: That's great. My other question was if there were any artifacts, memos, writings, awards, or pictures you had and would be willing to share, to become part of the School's archive. We would be very interested.

H: Well, for instance, I have two watches that were given to him. One in 1933 and one in 1951, I believe. They're inscribed on the back from the Sears people. They're very nice watches. I got them because of my Sears relationship and nobody else in the family wanted them when they broke up the stuff. Would this be something that you'd be interested in?

G: I was thinking of there were more things around the time when he was at MIT. Those would probably be more relevant.

H: Oh, OK. I'm trying to think what would be...

G: I hadn't thought of something like a watch. I will ask and see if there would be a place, presuming you would be happy if it was kept suitably, to have that be part of the MIT archive.

H: Yes, hang on just a second. One watch is sort of a tank watch and I can't read it, but it's inscribed on the back, "To EP Brooks from Sears Wisconsin District, 1933."

G: When he went to US Steel, right?

H: Yes. The other one is much more modern, and it's inscribed, "E. Penn Brooks from his Sears fans. 1951."

G: Wonderful. Let me ask about that with some of our people and I will get back to you.

H: As I say, in 1991 when we broke up the farm after his death, nobody wanted these. And because of the Sears connection, people said, "Why don't you take them?" I've had them in my drawer. Maybe once every couple years I'll put one on to wear it, but if you think this would be interesting for artifacts, I'd be happy to send them on.

G: Oh thank you! I will check on that and get back to you. May I ask, is telephone the best way to get in contact with you? I'd like to ask what your mailing address is too, so I have that.

H: OK. Mailing address is 205 East Third Street, Hinsdale, IL 60521-4220. And while we do have an email, from our biographies you realize that I'll be 87 in a couple weeks. And while we have email, we use it for contacting the kids and things like that. I don't look at it sometimes for a week at a time, and so it's not a very good way of communicating. There's nothing wrong with it, but I'm just not used to it!

G: OK. Would you like to give that to me just so I have it?

H: Oh sure! It's [Carolnhad@att.net](mailto:Carolnhad@att.net)

G: I'm going to have our conversation transcribed. I don't think there's any need for you to review it, but I'd certainly be willing to pass that on to you, if you were interested. I'm



just thinking it would be a burden for you to see the transcript of our conversation. But if we wanted to use some of this in the finished material, we would get in touch with you to review.

H: OK. No, I don't see any reason for me to get involved. My suggestion now is for you to contact Carol's oldest sister Beverly.

G: Yes, I was going to do that and we have that contact information. I have a phone number for her, which you had passed on. I will be following up with her as well.

H: Beverly had the advantage of living in Belmont from 1954 on, and with Carl's connection to MIT, she was in much more contact with her dad during those years than I was. Beverly is a very bright lady. She's very smart.

G: Wonderful. I will do that and I will tell her I got her name from you and see if she has time and would be willing to talk to us.

H: I think she'd be delighted to. You may find her quite negative about Howard. She thought Howard took quite a few ideas from her dad.

G: That's unfortunate.

H: Just be prepared for that. It doesn't make any difference to me, but the few times I met Howard, I thoroughly enjoyed him. He was a brilliant, very friendly, wonderful person, and married to a wonderful lady.

In the early days, Beverly worked in the book publishing area at MIT, back in the 1940s. Just so you know, she has a long-term connection with MIT.

G: That would be wonderful to talk to her.

H: Good luck!

G: Thank you, Mr. Pihl. I appreciate it very much. I will send you a short email so you have a way to reach me with my information and I just really appreciate your time and your thoughts and your care to speak with me.

H: My pleasure. We're talking about a very interesting, unique individual and as I say, while he was always a challenge, he was very nice to me.

G: That's great. Thanks again.

END OF PART ONE

## BEGIN PART TWO

*George Roth's Note: Next day, Mr. Pihl sent an email asking that I call him back as he had some things that he remembered and wanted to add. I called, and made the following recording (problems with the first try resulted in a second call and repeat of these stories)*

My notes at start of call: Mr Pihl talked about EP Brooks hiring Charles Kilstead. Kilstead was a store manager in Cleveland, and as a Vice President, Brooks was asked to interview him. The interview went well, and Kilstead was hired. Instead of being made the manager of the Milwaukee store, which is what was advertised, he was made the manager of the group of Sears stores in Cleveland. Brooks was upset because he should not have been put in a position where he was hired from a competitor in that geography.

Tapes goes on...

H: ... a group manager. That was many years ago and Mr. Kilstead was very successful at Sears. He was a dynamic individual. He became vice president of the southern territory and then later on president, then eventually chairman. While he was chairman, there was an opportunity for him to say thank you to this fellow who had originally hired him, EP Brooks, who had been at Sloan School.

As I look back, Dad Brooks was through active management as Dean, which had quit in 1959. So it worked out very well. It gave him the opportunity to come to Chicago on business four or five times a year. I imagine he had a little stipend too, which was helpful.

Coming to Chicago was a wonderful experience because he not only had his daughter, my wife, here but also his son Bob, who worked at Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, Michigan, which is 90 miles away. So it gave him a wonderful opportunity to keep renewal with the family, especially after Carol's mother had died in August 1971. So it was a very nice situation.

As head of profit sharing—the profit sharing is a big foundation into which money came from both Sears, Roebuck and each individual employee, to buy Sears stock for the individual's account. It was a hugely successful operation. It was started by Julius Rosenwald, who practically owned Sears in 1918. As I understand it, the Harris Trust started profit sharing in 1916, and the people there talked him into the concept, and it worked beautifully. In some instances, people retiring in the 50s and 60s were taking out more on retirement from their profit sharing account than they'd earned in all their years at Sears. It was remarkable because the Sears stock had appreciated so well during those years. It was a huge success and a big operation.

In total it owned about 25% of the shares in Sears, Roebuck, so it was a big operation. Every year, each employee got a report about how well they were doing in their profit sharing, based on the value of the stock as of 12/31 of the previous year. One year, after Dad Brooks had been chair for many years, he found that Mr. Kilstead had been saving up the contributions during the year to put it all into buying Sears stock at the very end of December, to give an artificial boost to the value of Sears stock. He was so incensed with that that he resigned. He felt that was unethical and immoral, unbusinesslike. From my viewpoint, it represented a kind of courage and uprightness that I always admired in my father-in-law, difficult as he was

sometimes. (laughing) He gave up a lot because he was gave up his four or five visits to Chicago on business and everything. But by golly he stuck to his guns.

G: This was a man he had hired and in some ways must have been his protégé.

H: I'm not sure it was a protégé as that he had done the initial hiring. I'm not sure Mr. Kelstead ever worked directly with Dad Brooks. I think the reason he was asked to interview Kelstead was because they wanted somebody more than the Personnel Department to visit this rather high-powered executive in Cleveland.

G: And he recognized that, apparently. Instead of going to run a store in Milwaukee, he was asked to run a group of stores.

H: To me, this represents a vindication of the DSC he won for his courage in WWI when he almost single-handedly captured a whole bunch of Germans. So he was courageous, he was ethical, and he was upright. Sometimes ornery, but by golly he was there! But I wanted you to have this story.

G: Thank you. I appreciate that. So you've talked about a number of courageous and upright stories. I wonder, now that you mention it, if you would share one ornery story, maybe more on the personal level.

H: (laughing) OK. As I say, he just adored his son, Bob. Very honestly, Dad Brooks was a male chauvinist and he did a great deal with Bob. Took him on fishing and hunting trips, which he never did with his daughters. Bob was his only son. He was the youngest of the family. Beverly was born in 1923, Carolyn 1925 and Bob in 1929. And because he wanted to keep this farm in the Brook's name, he sold the farm to Bob at a very advantageous price. His game plan, as he told me once, was that he would use the yearly installments that Bob paid for the farm as operating income, because he was giving a lot of his own money away.

Well, Bob ran into severe financial problems with the little company he owned in Richmond, VA, and he got to a point where he really wasn't keeping up with the payments. One summer when we were down there, he had Bob on the phone and he was being so terrible to Bob about that. He was just awful. I screwed up my courage and marched in and said, "Dad Brooks, Bob is your only son. You can't talk to him like that. Please call him up and apologize." I heard him lift up the phone, he did call, and he said, "Bob, Hadley says I should apologize!" I could have killed him.

G: Well, that took a great deal of courage I think on your part, knowing his personality.

H: Well, I was pretty appalled. But the fact that he said, "Hadley said I should apologize..."

G: Yes, I picked up on that right away. That wasn't saying, "I'm apologizing." I'm saying, "Somebody else told me to." So it's really not an apology, is it?

H: As I say, he could be ornery and curmudgeonly. He would question me on almost anything. I gave you the examples of the catenary arc and the nitrogen oxide.

G: Yes, yesterday.

H: This was 30 years ago and I'm not sure if it was nitrogen oxide or something, but it was a nitrogen compound. In those days I named it correctly. But any time I came up with something he didn't know, he would challenge me. So I pride myself in not being stupid!  
(laughing)

G: Thank you, Mr. Pihl. I appreciate that. I'm sorry to have to come back to you a second time to make sure we got the recording.

H: No problem. I'm glad the time worked out. I was just headed out to do a little shopping for the weekend.

G: Glad I caught you. Best on the weekend.

H: Thank you. Our wonderful caregiver comes in about 9:00. She worked for the wife of one of my friends for three years, and when Phyllis died in December 2009, my friend came to me in early January and said, "I think this lady would be very helpful to you." So we started her on a part-time basis and gradually five days a week.

G: So she's helping you with Carol.

H: Oh yes. She's originally from the Ukraine. She's a grandmother. She's just the age of our children. She turned 60 in October. Our children turned 60 last August. So as I say, she's the age of our children.

G: Great! I'm glad you found somebody good.

H: She has a lot of experience. She's a very strong lady. One time she ran a housecleaning business. So she helps taking care of the household, so she's a delight to have and we're very, very lucky. It makes my life possible and bearable in dealing with my wonderful wife, Carol.

G: That you can have her at home where she's comfortable.

H: Oh yeah. My dear wife has no short-term memory so we have to make sure that she doesn't leave the stove on or take the wrong pills. But she still has her wonderful personality

G: And a sweet countenance, I'm sure.

H: Yeah. There was one other story I wanted to mention to you.

G: Oh good! What was that?

H: On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950, Carol and I were sitting on the fence overlooking the pastures at the farm with a full moon coming up over the mountains. I asked her to marry me, and she said yes. Then she said, "Well, I'd like to think about it." But to me, the cat was out of the bag.

That was an important weekend because brother Bob's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was July 1 of that year, and he had some of fellow Marines up from Quantico. And there were 21 other members of the family there to help Bob celebrate his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. So I was faced with a whole melange of relatives, announcing the fact that we were engaged.

In those days, going home, you didn't fly, you took the train from Middleboro, VA to Covington, KY and from there you took the plane from Covington to Chicago. So the two of us, Dad Brooks, whom I scarcely knew had dinner in the dining car together. Fortunately Wendell Endicott was always wonderful to me. I think I mentioned to you, he tried hard to get me to be a son-in-law, but it didn't work. But he taught me about good cigars, really good cigars. I happened to have two very good cigars from him in my pocket, which I pulled out after our dinner on the diner, and I presented one to Dad Brooks. We enjoyed it, and frankly, I think that helped probably as much as anything to help my relationship with him in those early days as anything! Because Dad Brooks liked a good cigar too.

G: So you were meeting him on his terms.

H: With an excellent example of a cigar.

G: And your good taste.

H: Yeah. Looking back, I think that probably helped almost as much as anything. He eventually investigated me through the Personnel Department at Sears. Later, I found that he'd gone down to visit my superiors. I was working in the Chicago group of stores at that time, which is headquartered there. I later learned that he had gone down to visit the management down there, to get their take on me. He did what he called "personal reconnaissance."

G: That's right, or due diligence. You told the reconnaissance story the other day as well.

H: Carol's mother and I hit it off from the start, so I had a wonderful ally with Carol Wright Brooks. I'm sure she helped a great deal too.

G: Very good.

H: But I thought you'd like that story about the cigars.

G: I can see the pastures overlooking the farm now...

H: Yeah. Have you ever been down there?

G: I've been in that area. My in-laws, who are right about your age as well, live in Hendersonville.

H: Oh yeah, OK. It's absolutely gorgeous. They chose to build this beautiful retirement home on top of a hill and it was surrounded by a split rail fence and looking down, there was about three miles of river that wandered through the place. It was absolutely gorgeous with the mountains and the moon and everything. It was very romantic.

G: Wonderful.

H: And it's still a beautiful place. I've painted many paintings of it. The family enjoys them. So anyway, I won't keep you any longer.

G: Thank you again Mr. Pihl.

H: Have a great day and I'm glad we had a chance to talk.

END OF INTERVIEW