I'm Robert Heckert, a good friend of Walter's, who has asked me to come here to record some impressions and recollections of the city of Philadelphia as I knew it back as far as 50 years ago.

I came to the city in 1927 to settle down and was then associated with the Philadelphia Ethical Culture Society. It was not until 1943 that I became a radio commentator on station WIBG at that time. And a little later on with station KYW, where I became fairly well known throughout the Philadelphia area.

Walter would like me to characterize if I would some of the early mayors of the city going back to that time. Well, the first one I remember clearly and the first one with whom I had some contact was Mayor Harry Mackey. As everybody knows at that time all Philadelphia mayors were Republicans. And Harry Mackey was a good Republican. A good soldier in the Vare machine organization.

I want to say a good thing about Mayor Mackey. He came into the mayor's office in January 1928. It was a good time in the city and in the country, economically speaking, and we were enjoying great prosperity and Philadelphia was no exception to that rule. But in the middle of Mayor Mackey's term the great Depression struck the nation and of course Philadelphia along with it. And I remember very distinctly that there were hundreds, literally many hundreds of unemployed absolutely destitute men who were housed in an old warehouse around 16th and Hamilton streets where they were given simple food and shelter. And Mayor Mackey, as I recall very clearly, went there many a time to try to cheer up those men and to see to it they were properly taken care of. Under of course very primitive conditions. I thought very highly of Mayor Mackey in that regard. But of course in other respects he was a typical Republican mayor of the city of Philadelphia. Nothing much got done. Business took care of itself, more or less.

Manufacturing was going on at a great clip during the late '20's and there was a great deal more manufacturing in Philadelphia at that time than there is now because so many industries have moved out. For example, I recall the full-fashioned hosiery industry and I knew some of those people. Both the manufacturers and the labor union leaders. And I took part in a strike with the full-fashioned hosiery workers back in 1930. The Depression had hit and it was characteristic of all industries in the country at that time under such circumstances to drastically cut wages. They cut the hosiery workers wages as much as 25 and 30 percent. The hosiery workers came out on strike and I went up there to the Northeast in the Kensington section
and participated in the picket lines. And it was a rather hopeless situation and it was characteristic of the situation throughout the country. Hopelessness began to take a strong route and people began to feel that this depression is never going to end. And as a matter of fact it lasted for ten years, something that is a little bit incomprehensible I suppose to younger people of today.

In 1931 Mr. J. Hampton Moore, another Republican, was elected mayor of the city of Philadelphia. He was a typical Republican and I remember seeing him one day coming out of the Union League. Everybody in Philadelphia knows what the Union League is and where it is located -- on South Broad St. near Walnut. The Union League at that time was the citadel of Republican party reaction. It has changed a bit since then, but in those days nobody could get into the Union League unless you were a bon fide friend of a good Republican. And here was Mayor Hampy Moore coming out of the Union League on the arm of some big fat cat -- probably a big industrialist -- and I looked at them and said this is Philadelphia as it is today. And along about that same time no less a person than Herbert Hoover came into the city and I was standing near City Hall as his car went by from the station. In those days the Pennsylvania Railroad came all the way into the Broad St. station, which was right smack up against City Hall on Market St. Hoover went by -- hardly acknowledging the people on the sidewalks and he made his way to the Union League. And a very dramatic confrontation took place at the Union League inside on that occasion. I remember it well. I was not inside but I was close to the action. The governor of Pennsylvania at that time was a remarkable man by the name of Gifford Pinchot. And he was a maverick Republican, very much against Herbert Hoover, and in 1932 he supported Roosevelt for President. So Mr. Pinchot on this occasion dramatically confronted Mr. Hoover and demanded to know why he was not doing more for the unemployed and for the destitute people of the country who were numbering into the millions. Hoover was at a loss how to respond to this challenge and as I recall he tried to dodge the whole matter. And that was typical of Herbert Hoover. He was not by any means a flamboyant person, but very quiet, somewhat taciturn, and full of his own thinking which did not, unfortunately, meet the challenge of the times.

During the 1932 presidential campaign, which I remember very well, I was active myself in what was known as the League for Independent Political Action. I, like many millions of young men at the time, was very much concerned about the situation in the country and we racked our brains trying to
think up what ought to be done and what could be done. Many organizations sprang up and the League for Independent Political Action was headed by Prof. John Dewey of Columbia University. I happened to have sat under John Dewey in his philosophy lecture room at Columbia and I was naturally drawn to this organization when it came into being. We tried to alert the public to the absolute necessity of finding a totally new approach to the economic catastrophe which had hit the country. Some of us supported Roosevelt. Some of us supported Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate. And in 1932 I brought Prof. Dewey over to Philadelphia and had him give a speech at the old Women's Club. The Women's Club on south 12th street. And he made a speech there in which he castigated both political parties and created something of a little sensation of the day, which was written up in the local newspapers. But there was another incident in the 1932 campaign that I would like to talk about.

Jack Kelly, Sr., now dead and gone, who had been Republican all of his life, turned around in 1932 and became a Democrat. And very enthusiastically supported Franklin Roosevelt for the President. On the night of the election in November of that year Jack Kelly followed by, I would say and I was present, several hundred Democrats, old-line Democrats and new-line Democrats, converged on the Union League on the street and on the sidewalk and Jack Kelly himself went up the stairway and on the balcony -- you might call it a balcony in front of the main entrance -- he harangued the crowd and taunted (this was quite an act) the Republicans who were inside commiserating among themselves over the defeat of Herbert Hoover. Now I want to say more about Jack Kelly, because in my opinion Jack Kelly did as much, if not more, than anyone particular person in the city in drumming things up for the Democratic party and for the New Deal. I would say that for a full fifteen years before Dilworth and Joe Clark came on the scene Jack Kelly was laboring out there in the vineyard all over the city. Myself, I did a lot of travelling around the city all over -- in those days attending political meetings -- and everywhere I went I seemed to run into Jack Kelly. Jack Kelly was one of the most handsome men in the city in that day and he was very much admired not only for that but also for his great athletic prowess. He was Olympic sculling champion of that period and he became I think it was co-chairman of the Democratic City Committee. But I want to pay my tribute to Jack Kelly for his yeoman work during that long period. Although the country went Democratic in 1933 the city of Philadelphia did not. And that's important to remember. It was not until 1949 that the city itself went Democratic for the first time. Now during that long interval between 1932 and 1949 Jack Kelly I would say was the principal leader and laborer in the field. And he was very effective. But it took a long time before the city of Philadelphia swung over.
And I remember very well of course in 1949 when Clark and Dilworth won their offices --- their row offices for the first time. And it was of course an exciting moment. And then in 1951 came the banner year. It was the year of course when Joe Clark was elected mayor and Richardson Dilworth was elected District Attorney. And I recall a typical scene which I think was representative of the campaign that they put on. It was in front of the Bellevue Stratford Hotel --- they had drawn up a portable platform of some kind and they stood on that platform facing the entrance of the hotel. The sidewalks were crowded and the steps of the hotel were packed. And there they were --- relatively young-looking men. And I remember hearing a number of people in the audience saying they look young, don't they?

And there was an air of curiosity, an air of expectation, an air of hope. And as for Joe Clark and Richardson Dilworth, the impression I got on that day was that they were enormously quietly self-confident. Bold, and yet serene in their confidence that they were now about to usher in a new era in the political life of Philadelphia. Needless to say I voted for both men.

And then they came into office. The cry during the campaign was to get rid of the incubus of the do-nothing Republican bureaucracy, which they proceeded to do. And I think that was one of the greatest things that they accomplished. I didn't see much of Joe Clark during that period because I went off to Europe. I was a foreign correspondent for an international news service and I broadcast short-wave from Prague to the United States during quite a period. And I covered the Communist coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia and spent two or three years altogether in Eastern Europe. When I came back the Democratic --- I wanted to call them a machine --- but the Democratic organization was pretty strongly in power by this time. And Dilworth was now the mayor.

There is one little incident that I want to talk about concerning Dilworth which I think was characteristic of him and which may not be so widely known. At Christmastime he and his wife, Ann, made it a practice to go down into South Philadelphia on the night before Christmas just to visit the homes of the ordinary people down there. And I was present on one of those occasions in one of those humble homes --- the man's name was Pat Veladi (?). I'll never forget him --- he was a red-headed guy, little, short, pudgy fellow. And they were tickled to death that Richardson Dilworth and his wife had chosen to come to their home, among others. They came in and Richardson Dilworth, as most everybody knew him recalls, was a rather flamboyant type, but he was very quiet and subdued. And humble in the presence
of these people living in that humble home. He didn't make a parade of himself. He didn't talk a great deal. He let others do the talking. And he even listened to me. I got a very fine impression of Richardson Dilworth on those occasions. He really had the people in his heart and for my money and in the minds of a great many people he was the best mayor we've ever had. Joe Clark just a short distance behind. They were a great team. A great pair of friends. And they relied tremendously on each other. Each other's help. Each other's support. Each other's opinions. Each other's suggestions and so on. They were a Damon and Pythias.

One of the things that Walter has asked me about is about the earlier period that I spoke about a little while ago was about the cultural life of the city. I was a member at the time, back in the late '20's, of what was called the Contemporary Club. It met once a month at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel and believe it or not you had to wear formal dress to be admitted. But it was very high class, high toned, and really cultural. On each occasion they would invite a distinguished speaker. I recall, for example, there was an astronomer from Harvard University, Harlow Shapley, and people like that. People of distinction. And sometimes there would be a debate. And I remember a debate between Clarence Darrow and which took place around about that time. It was sensational, to say the least, and I was very much interested to see let alone hear Clarence Darrow. And he was the greatest defense lawyer of his time. Now he took the negative side of the question is religion necessary? And of course Rabbi Fineshriber took the affirmative side. The Contemporary Club, I think I am correct in saying, was the leading intellectual and cultural institution of its kind in the city at that time. If we leave out the life of the universities.

The Academy of Political and Social Science was very active in those days and always held a yearly colloquium at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel at which national and international speakers came for a two-day session at which they discussed current local, national, and international problems of the day. I never missed any of those sessions. Later on they moved to the Benjamin Franklin hotel, and I think today that has gone out of existence.

Another activity of a cultural nature, which I would like to mention and which no longer exists in the city, is what was called the Cultural Olympics. The Cultural Olympics was headquartered at the University of Pennsylvania, but it was not a strictly university activity. Cultural Olympics enlisted the interest and the participation of young people in the schools throughout the city to come forward to present the results of the cultural activity in the school. And it was a certain kind of competition which they fostered and prizes were given out by Cultural Olympics to students that had distinguished themselves in various
cultural fields. I'm sorry to say that that organization no longer exists.

In 1945 a very determined effort was made here in the city to bring the United Nations organization to Philadelphia to make its headquarters here. I participated in that movement. I was now at this time a commentator on station KYW and I did all that I possibly could over the air to stir up and drum up enthusiasm and support among all elements in the city to get behind this effort to bring the United Nations headquarters to Philadelphia. I recall some of the people who were active in that movement at the time -- some of them are now dead and gone. Actually, I'm able to report that there was a good possibility that Philadelphia would get the UN headquarters. It was proposed to set it up in Fairmount Park, but almost at the last minute John D. Rockefeller, II, came into the picture and he offered a very valuable piece of ground in New York City and I guess a bag of money and the UN took that offer and Philadelphia lost out. It was very unfortunate. But it should be known that by the present generation that there were public-spirited citizens in Philadelphia at that time who made that gallant effort. And I also took part in those years of 1944 and 1945 in the national campaign for the United Nations. We had a United Nations association in the city at that time and I remember Mrs. Granville Montgomery was one of the leading spirits in it and I also remember Mrs. Stuart Lauchheim, among others. And they recruited me among others to be one of the speakers to go around the city talking up the idea of having a United Nations. I appeared before many clubs and societies and colleges and schools and so on. And it was a very inspiring time. There was a lot of idealism in the air in those days. We were coming to the end of the war and we were winning the war and it appeared to all of us that we were about to enter a new and better period in national and international history. And of course I spoke in behalf of the idea of the United Nations very enthusiastically and I placed great hopes in its future. I think now that after having said that I might revert again to the decade of the '30's and going on into the early '40's, the period of the second world war. People today who are under the age of say of about 40 have no conception of what the great Depression was like. We had about 12 to 15 million unemployed at the height of the Depression in 1933, just before President Roosevelt was inaugurated in March of that year. Twelve to fifteen million unemployed must be thought of against the background of a population of only about 125 million as compared with the population today of about 215 million. And it must also be remembered that at that time women were not in the labor force in any great numbers so that the unemployed figure of 15 million was simply catastrophic.
I recall, for example, in front of the Union League -- I always
like to go back to the Union League -- because it was a symbol
of so much that obtained at that time. In front of the Union
League in that early period of the Depression, and I'm talking
about 1930, 1931, 1932, there were unemployed men -- but
what do you suppose they were doing? They were selling apples
at a nickel a piece to keep the wolf from the door. Now that
was a symbol of the times. Somebody thought up the brilliant
idea while helping the unemployed by making it possible for
them to sell apples. And what irony it was to think these
men -- these poor, dejected men standing in front of that
pillar of reaction and that pillar of prosperity in other days,
the Union League. Now when you went out into the neighborhoods
of the city at that time you found blank despair. And yet one
of the amazing things about the whole drama of the Depression
of the '30's was that there was no violent protest of any kind.
There was no violent picketing of the White House. There was
no violent picketing of City Hall. There was no violence of
any kind during that whole period. In contrast to the violence
that we have seen back in the '60's.

When the war came prosperity came back to the country almost
overnight and Philadelphia profited from war industry. We
were a center of ship building. I recall oftentimes I used
to be up in the PSFS building, up on one of the top floors.
And you could see out over the Delaware and across the river
in Camden. All the shipyards over there were going full blast
producing ships. The shipyards down in Chester going full blast.
Shipyard at Cramps (?), up in the Kensington section going
full blast. None of them are going full blast today. And
that was the picture of Philadelphia and it was the picture
of the nation as a whole. In the late '30's itself -- I'd
say around 1940 -- President Roosevelt had proclaimed that the
United States would be the arsenal of the democracy. This
was before we got into the war. And I want to make this remark
about Roosevelt during that period. I didn't like some of the
things he did but I wholeheartedly supported him in his
clever, skillful, highly professional manner in which he gradually
drew this country which at that time was in a strongly
isolationist mood -- he gradually and successfully drew the
nation into a frame of mind in which they realized that it
was going to be absolutely necessary to oppose to the death
the Nazi bid for world supremacy. And I was in Germany also
in 1936 and '37 and I could see with my own eyes what was
going on there and there was no doubt in my mind that they
were definitely preparing for war and it was only a question of
time as to when the war would be unleashed.

A certain number of refugee Jews came to this country at that
time -- they were forced out of Germany -- and some of them
came to Philadelphia and I met some of them and I am able to report that their bearing and their manner was characterized by great fear and apprehension even at this great distance from Germany. They were so hypnotized by the amazing success that Hitler was achieving in Europe and they couldn't see anybody as stopping it unless it would be the US.

To go back to the administrations of Joe Clark and Richardson Dilworth, Walter was anxious to know how the news media treated them at that time. Well, they treated them very well despite of the fact that the Philadelphia Inquirer was a Republican newspaper. They gave pretty good play to both men and their administrations and at that time there was another newspaper in Philadelphia called the Philadelphia Record, which was a Democratic newspaper. The only one in the city. And needless to say they supported the Democratic administration wholeheartedly. I knew the publisher of the paper of that time — I used to go up there to the Record building on North Broad St. I could walk in there any time of the day, any time of the year, walk right into his office and have a chat with him. That was J. David Stern, a great fellow. The Record went out of existence — what year was it? They were out of business when Joe Clark became mayor. But all during the '30s J. David Stern, who was, who had a good close personal relationship with President Roosevelt, it was the one newspaper in the city that supported the Democratic candidate.

We come to the administration of Jim Tate. I used to go around City Council to attend City Council sessions while he was President of City Council. Well, he did the job in a businesslike way and unimaginitively, sort of mechanically I would say and I couldn't for the life of me imagine that he would be the next mayor of Philadelphia after Richardson Dilworth. And I couldn't for the life of me foresee that he would be in that office for ten years. Now I agree with what Dilworth said at one time about Tate. He said that Tate and his crew drove the city into the ground, devastated. The old politicians came back into power and it seems that in politics as in almost everything else there is an ebb and a flow, a swing of the pendulum, and the pendulum was swinging back toward conservatism and toward crony politics and so on. And it was very depressing. There is no question in my mind. In fact I knew very well from being around City Hall a good deal and being in close touch with a number of Democratic politicians there is no question that Jim Tate was the most responsible person for putting Rizzo into the mayor's office. He hand-picked Rizzo. I knew Rizzo in his police days and I've known him ever since. I've never supported him for mayor. Rizzo is a fellow who has two sides to his character. He has an appealing and attractive side. He has compassion for certain people. He shows kindness toward people in many situations. And then he has that other side — the vicious side, which is so deplorable. And it is such a comedown from the days of Joe Clark and Richardson Dilworth, who are highly educated gentlemen.
now being succeeded by somebody who has never known what culture was.

I look for a change for the better following the present Rizzo administration and I think every effort should be made to make sure that the present mayor will not have a third term. I would like to go back again to the earlier period that I spoke about and I would like to say something about the quality of the people in this city fifty years ago. I think that by and large the quality of the population of Philadelphia fifty years ago was on a generally higher level than it is today. There are of course exceptions to that rule. We have fine groups of people in the city. But I'm talking about the population taken as a whole. The quality level has gone down and I hope and anticipate that that trend will be reversed during the coming years and that the leaders in our city, whether they be in politics or in business or in education or in other walks of life will consert their efforts to bring back to the city, to attract to the city, people who have formerly lived here and also people in other sections of the state or in the country to bring them in here and to again raise the general level of our people. We are experiencing one crisis after another. In not only our economic life but in the administration of the schools and in other situations. Let me make a few remarks about what I think are some of the great things that have happened in Philadelphia in these years of my experience. I have often had occasion to host foreign visitors coming to the United States -- friends of mine -- and I've been extremely proud in recent years to be able to take them down to the historic sections of our city centering around Independence Hall. All that great redevelopment down there has been a tremendous asset to the city and to the nation and as I say I always feel tremendously proud when I can take my visitors down there to show them the environment of the early history of this republic.

Then a great advance, a great initiative, that was taken by Mayor Dilworth was the redevelopment of what is called Society Hill. I always like to take visitors down there. And Fairmount Park -- another area which has been greatly improved in recent years.

And on the other hand, of course, we have to balance that by the awful deterioration and disintegration of ever so many neighborhoods which were good places to live when I first came to Philadelphia. If that is ever going to be wiped out, I don't know. I hope so. Perhaps not in the near future.
I am optimistic about the city of Philadelphia and in spite of everything I think that we have leadership here and I think that the people will consider what they have been going through in the last few years and will come up with a new judgment on men and policies and I am hoping and I am optimistic in believing that we are going to have another new renaissance perhaps in the decade of the '80's.

(WMP: May I inject a question — how do you feel that our cultural institutions have fared in recent years?)

When I came to Philadelphia the Philadelphia public library was located in an old rundown three-story two by four brick building near 13th and Locust. I thought it was a disgrace. Fortunately, within two or three years of my coming here the new library on Logan Square was erected and occupied. But I remember going out there -- I was a frequent visitor there and user of the library -- you would go out there on many a day any day of the week and see only a handful of people. Today that library is busy constantly on all fours. Packed with people of all ages. The same thing can be said of the Art Museum on the Parkway. I was present when it was opened. And for years after that you would go out to the Art Museum and see only a handful of people inside. That situation today is changed, thanks to the fine leadership of its directors, especially the most recent one, Mr. Evans. The Art Museum today is a busy institution, visited by young and old alike and we are proud as Philadelphians to be able to say that it is one of the leading art institutions in the country.

The universities -- I think the University of Pennsylvania and Temple have perked up a good deal. They were rather staid institutions back in the '20's and '30's, but now like a great many other institutions in the country you see more and more women on the campus, more and more minorities, and of course that's true in our political life and our social life generally. I think that culturally our city is on a higher level today than it has ever been in the past. And I think that is one of the bright spots of living here in the city and it is one of the things that holds me here.

Back around 1949, when I returned from a long stint in Europe, I was happy to see that a new radio station had been just then established -- and I'm referring to radio station WFLN, the classical station. I'm proud to be able to say that through the recommendation of my good friend Walter here I was taken
on as the first news commentator on that station. I wasn't
on too long in the first stint, but I came back some years
later after I had been abroad again and I think that radio
station WFLN is one of the most precious cultural assets that
we have here in Philadelphia and it is gratifying to see that
while at first and for a number of years you've had to struggle
along with very little revenue, it is now enjoying prosperity
and enjoying an ever-increasing audience which is most
appreciative of the cultural offerings which it makes to
listeners in the city. It is a repository of the best class
of music of all periods and it is the station that broadcasts
the Philadelphia orchestra every week -- the orchestra which
is one of the cultural jewels of our city. And I want to pay
tribute to Mr. Ray Green, the President, who has been with the
station from the very beginning and more responsible than
anyone else for its growth and development. He was fittingly
honored a couple of years ago when he received the man of the
year award of broadcast pioneers. I'm proud to be able to say
that I am a member of the Broadcast Pioneers and I have a
little plaque on my wall which says that I am a member of the
organization going back to the beginning of the '40's and
signed by that longtime radio pioneer and broadcaster, H. V.
Kaltenborn. And I wish it could be said that all the other
stations in Philadelphia are equally valuable in the cultural
sense. Now we do have public broadcasting and we have channel
12, which I want to salute, which is adding significantly
to the cultural life of this city and its environs.