

Today we are interviewing John West, Today's date is March 24, 1995 and the interview is taking place at Marquette high school.

JW: Would you like me to talk about my grandfather using this list here?

INT: your name first.

JW: Oh my name is John West I am the grandson of Luther West and I was asked to talk about my grandfather and give some information, some reminiscences. My grandfather was born September 6, 1899 in Utica, New York. As a small child he moved to a little place called ??? which is where his father was from. His father was the wealthiest in this small little country town, the family owned about a thousand acres of land which was found out. Land from that my grandfather's grandfather had built up quite a financial empire from investments and so forth. I think that this was Luther's grandfather that was wealthy. His grandfather was also getting on in years and needed someone to come and basically take care of the land and the businesses and so my grandfather, Luther's father, Norman West came back there to live there and take care of the properties and so forth. When Luther's grandfather died he was about age 11, age 12 then they did sell off the properties and ??? and move to ??? New York which is a larger town ??? company ??? where he resumed going to school, he went to the ?? academy. After he graduated from the ??? academy he went to Cornell University which was only about 50 miles away in upper New York where he started out in agriculture, eventually got into biological sciences got a bachelors degree and went on to get a PhD in biology. He had in ??? met Beatrice ? Whine? who he would later marry just after graduating from getting his bachelors degree and they would have two of their six children while he was still a graduate student at ?? Following his PhD work he was employed at Battle Creek, at what was called the ?Colop? Institute, it was a private college it maintained a sanitarium for patients but this was a private college was also to give students from all over the world and all over the country. It was small but it had a good academic reputation. He taught biology there and eventually the head of the department. In the 1930's, about 1937 I believe it was, the college became something ??? the depression. Fall enrollment not able to get enough quality students the college decided to close down. So he was without a job for a while but he was able to get a job up at Northern Michigan Teacher's College, at the time. And came up here to Marquette where he taught Biology, became head of the Biology department, and eventually after teaching at Northern for about 27 years he became the first Dean of Arts and Sciences. Retired from Northern at 1965 and continued to live in the community until his death about

INT: 85 maybe?

JW: That sounds about right, he was involved in a lot of civic affairs and he was at one time on the Board of Directors of what

was then the St. Luke's Hospital and then he was also active in his church, First Methodist Church. He was quite well known throughout the community by a lot of people. I don't know do you have some specific questions you want me to

INT: Can you tell me about how long you knew him?

JW: Well throughout my childhood I moved around alot, my father was the ?master. But during the summers I would see him for a week or two, then after I graduated from high school I came to Northern and at that point I really got to know him. I would visit him frequently, then after getting my undergraduate work and getting my masters degree from Northern I spent a couple of years in the Marine Corp. between that and Marquette, I have lived in Marquette ever since. so I got to know my grandfather quite well. Once he developed some health problems in his later years, he had a stroke and later had to be placed in a nursing home where he spent his last few years. I was his only relative in the area, I was the guardian and conservator.

INT: Can you tell us any personal stories, HARD TO HEAR

JW: There was a lot you know, a lot of things he would tell, he would tell me a lot about family. He was a very interesting man to talk with, he would talk about many interesting subjects, He was a scientist but he took an interest in a lot of things, literature, history and ahm philosophy and poetry, he knew a lot, he was an interesting person to talk to about a lot of different things. I can remember bringing over a couple of roommates when I was a freshman at Northern and to the house and they were fascinated just to listen to him talk, he could talk and you could enjoy themselves. People were just interested in sitting around and talking to an old man, but he was very interesting. He did always demanded a lot of himself though He wanted and always felt a person should do their best and should achieve. He also held high standards for himself but also for those that worked for him. He was also a very diplomatic individual. But, never wanted to create problems or waves, problems could be avoided and feelings could be avoided. In his later years after he had some problems, his stroke and he also had some profession, ?? he did tell me once he is much more willing to ? make judgements about people, because he couldn't meet all the standards for himself and he realized others couldn't ?? One of the, he did enjoy being outside a lot, he enjoyed hunting he did it ever since he was a boy. And ahm he actually encouraged his children to come and hunt with him. My father once told the story about being out with him and my father had a single shot 4-10, he had a double barrel 12 gage, this was suppose one of the triumphs of the youth, my grandfather, missed it with the first shot with his 12 gauge, didn't get it with the second shot, but when my father pushed up his gun, he got it with the first

shot, with single shot 4-10. That is just something about my grandfather he did go out and ah he encouraged everyone to do there very best and he expected it.

INT: I had heard from several different sources that he was a musician and he also sang in the Church choir? Did he play an instrument.

JW: Yes he played the guitar and I think he also could play the piano to a certain degree, proficiency I don't know if he was quality musician. He did enjoy singing. He did sing in the choir. All his children took up music, some of them took up several instruments, all of them basically learned how to use the piano, some quite well, some of the daughters took up violin, my father was a saxophone player, he played in band, also some of his brothers and sisters took up singing, I don't know if they still, barber shop quartet, so there was music was one of the important things that were valued in the family.

INT: Are there Jane Phillips in his office the alternate pictures of he's son's and pictures of his daughter's do you know anything about that, why he would do something like that?

JW: Why he would do that? I don't know, I think that he was a person who always seemed to want a some sort of geometric order to things. The only thing I can say is when he get his flower gardens he wanted to have symmetry. He wanted to have these little square plants ?? it was I suspect that's the only explanation it was just some orderly pattern he was trying to achieve in display of these things.

INT: She also mentioned ? letters ?/ she even described

JW: Yes I have that. It's my sister that my sister she carved this out of a old cedar root. It's sort of a ? like face and now cedar walking stick it is rather unique and he used it in his later years. It was functional as well as decorative it was sturdy enough to be used as a little cane.

INT: Did you know anything about people like ?

JW: This again I told you he liked things symmetrical and yes he would take a piece of chalk in each hand and since he was a biologist and many of the things he would do he would make symmetrical like if he was making an insect and the insect was symmetrical he would draw both sides at the same time it'd be a butterfly or ? or whatever he was using both the right and the left hands it would be the same motions in drawing those things it's one of those things that people had remarked me who had him as a teacher that sort of fascinated them that he could do this and could ? very quick very ? symmetrical aspect that I mentioned ? pictures displays

INT: He was a like he wanted order

JW: Yes, yes he did, to a large extent that was one of the reasons why he was so successful. He wanted everything to be precise and he wanted everything? spent the time and effort to do this and also one of the things that bothered him later in his life ?? created some problems for him because after he had his stroke he was able to recover quite dramatically from it. it was quite a serious stroke and he was virtually paralyzed from it for a while but a lot of hard work and dedication to do physical therapy a lot of effort ?. He really recovered almost all his ability to the point that he was able to drive a car again and but he never was a hundred percent I'd say he got at least 90% of his abilities but what bothered him so much is what he couldn't do again he wasn't able to met the standards that he had set for himself.

INT: Could clear up something for me we were talking about that yesterday Mrs. Phillips and I she thinks that right after he had his stroke his right side

JW: So he had to learn to write with his left hand

Int: Yeah she said that he had to learn even though he could draw with his left he could write had to learn to write cause this right here is an example of his drawing

JW: Yes he got to be very good at it. He had a lot of stick-toaness and real dedication in doing the job and it's amazing what he was able to accomplish. Everyone who worked with him thought he was the model being reconditioned and being rehabilitated from this stroke the only thing in his mind he had not been able to totally recover so it bothered him. It did bother him

INT: Can you tell me something about why he always had a tie on? Is that part of his attitude that he wanted to have everything in order?

JW: yes he was a very neat person, in his earlier years he was always neat and orderly and clean and well groomed throughout his whole life but actually he was probably a better dresser when he was a little bit younger. When he got older, even though he did wear a tie and so forth, his taste in clothing and color combinations wasn't always quite ??? but yes he was always a neat person ?? or maybe it was just the ??? and the polyester sports jackets that he sometimes wore didn't quite meet with my ??? maybe I am a little biased on that. But no he was always neat, that was part of his personality.

INT: He always wanted the best out of himself and out of other people. Now ????, now say if one of the children or someone that was working for him that he thought they weren't doing their best how would he go about, would he go about it diplomatically

or, I mean? For example, my brother my parents tried everything. It starts with ??? they just kind of given up and they would just yell at him, and that is just kind of the cold kind of thing. Did it ever get to that point? Because I asked that same question to Mrs. ?Folks? it would have never gotten to that point because everyone respected and admired him and you wanted him to be your best friend.

JW: Yeah, I would agree with that, there was a situation, there was one time in which we were going to be going hunting and he was going to come out and get me and it was early on a Saturday morning and I woke up, I had an alarm set, I woke up and I thought wow I can go back and I'll just lay down for a little bit longer and then I'll get up. And I laid down for a little bit longer and I went back to sleep and he was there wrapping on the window at me ???? that I wasn't ready. He sort of expected me to get ready. That was a situation that wasn't that big of a deal but I was embarrassed because he was unhappy with the situation. He did, he wanted to do it right. In a sense he being somewhat meticulous he would sort of expect you to do the little things right and if you didn't in a way you I suppose you really messed up big time ??? yell ??? a little fearful of his feelings because you really would want ??? Although you knew nothing was going to happen, you knew he wasn't going to do nothing bad it's just that you didn't want to displease him. You felt like you let him down if you didn't if you hadn't done a job that was the best job that you could do or at least a good ?? effort, if it was within your control to do something and you had not done ??? carelessness then I, he would not look upon that favorably and somehow he didn't have to tell you that, you sort of knew it. But also it is interesting the way that he would sometimes react with different people. There was once where the former president of the University, President Harden, was talking with him when he was the dean of arts and sciences and they were talking about a particular faculty member and Dr. Harden said, "Well what do you think of this person?" and he ??? said "Well, Dr. Harden, I would say that he is very casual in the ???" and Dr. Harden said "Well yes, the way that I would put would be ?slavenly?" The difference is that shows the difference in the two personalities. Dr. ? was sort of blunt, outspoken, not worried about saying things, said things as he said and wasn't ? afraid to criticized somebody, my grandfather always said if you didn't have to hurt people's feelings you didn't have to say something bad about them there wasn't any reason to say something that really isn't necessary. So ahm,

INT: In his work about the housefly, ? she said that ah sometimes he would get information that was in foreign language, he knew how to speak German, Spanish, and French, do you know anything about that?

JW: ah, I don't know how well he spoke it, but he had ? passable reading knowledge. because he would carry on correspondence with people from foreign countries. with the, simply reading some of

this information he had to read, and scientific information corresponded with people from other countries, he had functional I don't know if you would say he was good at it, but he was good enough.

INT: Do you know anything about his hobbies? I know he liked gardening

JW: gardening, he liked hunting, he had a cottage with 160 acres just south of town, just off the Green Garden Hill area, we have that in the family now, my friends ??, it was one of his favorite spots, acquired this in 1950, yes it was an old farm that he painted it up, patched it up, mowed the lawns around it that had grown up into knee high brush to a large extent, an old apple orchard that he cleaned off the old wood, grows apples still grows apples, not commercial quality, still functional we make apple cider out of them. He spent a lot of his time especially in the summer out there, he was had the biology club out there at times, often times have picnics out there, in which they would play softball and so forth, he did like the place he spent a lot of time out there. That's where, he garden at his house but also had gardens out at the farm, did enjoy it, he enjoyed being outside.

INT: he talked about, ??? (this was impossible to make out), explain it too me, I got from some of his sources, what he was doing in his work, like on the housefly, it wasn't for himself, it wasn't for, kind of a big overview of mankind

JW: I don't know, tell me if I am right or not. The reasons he was a housefly to a large extent is a public ? the fact that a housefly is used for experimentation and also for public health in cleaning up and producing sanitary conditions. Is one of the main reasons. One time the book was in the United Nations. and

INT: Was that during World War II?

JW: No, during World War II he was in the army he was teaching sanitation and ahm to ah people in the Army that could go out and teach it and deal with it. so that he was

INT: Technology end of it?

JW: I think it was basically dealing with ah in a sense more public health

INT: like for the soldiers

JW: yes for the soldiers yes, for the soldiers, he was not teaching the soldiers as much as he was teaching doctors and people that would be dealing with the sanitation aspects. and to help keep everybody healthy in a sense, but he spent his time during World War II in Washington D.C. doing this type of thing, preparing people to go out and be involved.

Later After World War II, the United Nations had programs to improve the sanitation in the countries, he had made trips a few times, one of them were to Middle East, visited Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan and so forth. This was all part of the public health efforts of the United Nations.

INT: Ahm, his wife was Beatrice, she passed on before he did

JW: Yes she passed on in about 1988

INT: ? once made a comment about how that he was lucky to have her, how much he loved her and how much she had done for him. Like when he had his ? pushed aback from the university she went to a lot of work for him. Can you tell me what kind of relationship they had?

JW: they had aa very close relationship, they had ? I can remember when they were both in there 70's, I believe 70's, I can remember combing here and he would give her shoulder a little nudge in a situation, just being gently, again ? developing she was developing Alzheimer's, she had a short introduction, she was fading mentally for over a period of years. She was a very quiet person, and earlier in the year she was real active with oh the typical duties of a wife of someone in a prominent university. she did what she was expected to do, I don't know how much she liked doing it, normally she was a very private person, rather, normally relatively shy, I never really knew her really well until I came to Northern she was already in her late 60's. It was shortly after that she started to fade mentally, she really didn't participate much in outside activities after that. She pretty much stayed int he house after that, they lived in a house a block from Peter White Library and she would, an expedition for her in those days would be to get to the library and back.

INT: What kind of relationship did he have with his kids?

JW: I think quite a good one.

INT: With you father. in Owasco michigan, married to the dentist

JW: yes, he was a fairly demanding person, all of his kids were pretty capable. He let all of them take up music of some form or another. To a large extent there were freedom given to a choice of what they wanted to do in regards to ? they were all expected to do something, they were all good students, they all achieved in the fields that they went into. My father went into they army as a career officer he was able to by the time he retired rise to the rank of Lt. Colonel he got a couple of master's degrees in civil engineering and business administration. Another brother of his was a chemist who worked for the UpJohn company for many years. The youngest brother got a Ph.D from Dartmouth in

Biology and taught for a while and is currently for a Pharmaceutical company. His daughters two of them were teachers, one of them is currently married to a the head librarian at Western ? University. And another of the daughters married a dentist, the third daughter was a teacher is retired now in Colorado Springs.

INT: Which one of the daughters is Ruth.

JW: Ruth is in Illinois married to the librarian. She is the oldest.

INT: Oldest, Which one is Richard

JW: Richard is my father

INT: You call him John though,

JW: Yes

INT: so he would be the second LT. Brigadire

JW: IT goes Brigadere, Major and so it is ?

INT: Willmer

JW: He works for the UpJohn Co. in Kalamazoo, he is retired, in fact they are all retired except for the youngest now.

INT: Which would be David,

JW: David is working at on his ?

INT: Alice

JW: Alice was a teacher in, she is currently living in Colorado Springs, she is retired now

INT: next one would be, Betsy

JW: Betsy is living in Owasso michigan, married to the Dentist

INT: Can you tell me, say one thing you can remember your grandfather or one thing that he has left you with, that is yours. Left in your mind, what would it be.

JW: When I think of my grandfather I think of him as very dignified and person with always desired of certain ? of certain properness. He always had a good sense of humor could tell a story like that. He also owes talented many ways, much of his success came from real effort and work he worked hard he when he had to give a speech he spent a lot of time writing the speech, and making ? ? he was not a spontaneous person in many ways, he could be in a



conversation, but, when he had to do something he always wanted to do his best. He could be very entertaining ? ? certainly not a dull person. One of things he wrote a number of books many of them scientific, he did some other things too, one a little poetry book, also in the library they have the ? value fields copy of theory, which is his remembrance of his life his early childhood years in ? which is a town the size of Skandia only had a really a little cross roads community. The last time I was there it had a general store with couple of gas pumps, that was the only business for the most part. Had a couple of small Churches, something unique I think in modern America, it had a GAR hall that stands for Grand Army Republic, The Grand Army Republic is civil war veterans, obviously there isn't any of these alive. This little tiny town had a very thriving chapter of this Republic. In this little cemetery there are 57 veterans buried there. for a town this size had to mean virtually everyone must of signed up and come back, and as they died they were buried there. But the GAR hall has the title of GAR hall, but is used now as the township hall.

INT: One more question, family life, when he came to this area I read in a prior interview with a student, he never ? when he first came to Northern he lived outside the city limits, he said life was tough. Do you know anything about that?

JW: He lived in a house that still exists, just a little bit south of the intersection of 41 and 28, you go about 1/4 mile down the road he lived in a little house there, he always liked living in the country. It went back to his childhood. He lived in the country in a town outside of Battle Creek. He liked it out there but during World War II, he was away and he wasn't able to get gasoline, and as the children started to grow up it became difficult to get the children into town and so forth. At that time he had a number of problems that led to getting a house into town, and moving into town, shortly after moving into town, about 5 years he went got the country property, so he could have a cottage out of town.

INT: When we first started I forgot to mention when is your birthday?

JW: My birthday, I was born March 26, 1947, in a couple days I will be 48.

INT: Okay, how many grandchildren did he have

JW: My parents had three, let me count it is not that easy. He had about 16, let me see maybe 14

INT: if you could describe you grandfather in one word what would that word be?

INT: or can't you describe him because he was a man of so many ?

JW: he was a talented individual, like I say a lot of his talent, his tanasism, he was interested in so many things and when he was interested in things he wanted to put his best effort forth. I would say he probably was something of a Perfectionist.