



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Oral History Interview

with

Hugh Barton

Interviewer: *Francesco De Salvatore*

Narrator: *Hugh Barton*

Location of Interview:
6301 Stevenson Ave, Alexandria, VA, 22304

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Transcriber: *Kerry J Reed*

Summary:

Hugh Barton is world traveler who lived and worked briefly in Alexandria in the 1950s and returned in 1994, and has lived there since. He describes various incidents in his life, including a seven day flight across the Pacific, living on a farm in Maryland during World War II, working as a journalist and a travel marketer in Hong Kong and Guam, and finally returning to Alexandria and becoming involved in community activities.

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General	Wartime experience, Career in Tourism, Alexandria Journal, Alexandria in the 1990s
People	Hugh Barton, Dick Wright, James Barton, Sir Sidney Barton
Places	Shanghai, Maryland, Alexandria, Hong Kong, Guam

Hugh Barton: [00:00:04] Hugh Charles Barton. I'm 88 years old or I will be next week. The date today is June 21st, 2023. And I'm at my apartment at 6301 Stevenson Avenue in Alexandria, zipcode 22304. [00:00:22][17.1]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:00:23] Okay. My name is Francesca De Salvatore, I'm 31. Today is June 21st, 2023, and we're at 6301 Stevenson Avenue in Alexandria, Virginia. So, Hugh, why don't we start with some of your family history. Can you tell us a little bit about your grandparents? [00:00:41][17.5]

Hugh Barton: [00:00:42] Yeah. I love to start here because I have two very well-known and renowned grandfathers. I'm very lucky in that way. On my British side, my father was British, and his father, who was my grandfather, was a distinguished British diplomat. And he ended up his life as he was knighted, he was Sir Sidney Barton. And he really became well known both in China during the Boxer Rebellion in the turn of the century. And then in later years, he went to then Abyssinia, which is Ethiopia, and he was very close with the emperor Haile Selassie. And when the Italians, sorry, came storming in and trying to take over the country, he was very instrumental in evacuating the emperor back to Britain with his family. And then later, he was very helpful in getting Haile Selassie back to Ethiopia, back into power and throwing the Italians out. So, he was very well known in his time as a British diplomat. My mother was American and her father was in the U.S. Navy. And part of his Navy service, he was, again, a diplomat and a naval diplomat, and he served in both China and in Brazil, actually Brazil twice. But in China, that's when his daughter, who was my mother, married my father, who was out there just having graduated from Oxford and getting into the British Foreign Service. So, my father was in China and he was just starting his career in the British diplomatic service and was quite a man around town. He rode polo ponies and he acted in amateur theatrics. And he met my mother, who was also a young sort of member of the American community out there. And they ended up getting married in 1932 in China, in Shanghai actually, where my father had been posted. And so they were living in Shanghai. And then a few years later, in 1935, I came along. My mother actually went back to California for my birth, to be with relatives in San Francisco or just outside of San Francisco. And I was born there. And then as soon as I was able to travel, we went back to China and I spent the next five years there until 1940. And unfortunately, that's when my father died. He had been detained by the Japanese for a few days, and then when he was released to get home, he walked through some terrible flooding and he got a strep throat, which today is no big deal. But then they didn't have the proper medical supplies and drugs in those days. And he died. So, my mother was left as a widow. And the war had started actually in Europe. And the Japanese were bombing Shanghai. So, it was deemed a good idea to get back to this country. So, we had a rather harrowing and long trip back from from Shanghai to Hong Kong and then to San Francisco. And that's another story, and I'll leave that. But it was an amazing flight on Pan American. It took seven days from Hong Kong to San Francisco. But anyway, then I ended up back in, actually in Annapolis, Maryland, just outside of Annapolis, where my grandfather, my American grandfather had a farm. And I spent the war years there. [00:05:21][278.7]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:05:25] So can you describe both your parents a little bit more? Can you describe who they were? [00:05:30][5.3]

Hugh Barton: [00:05:30] Well, my dad was a British diplomat. Graduated... [00:05:35][4.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:05:36] What was his name again? [00:05:36][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [00:05:36] Jimmy, James, James Holden Barton. But he was called Jimmy and he graduated from Oxford and gone into the diplomatic service, the British Foreign Service, and was posted in China. And as I say, he was a member of the sort of diplomatic set there in in Peking initially, or Beijing now they call it, but Peking initially and then was posted to Shanghai. And that's where he met my mother. And Jimmy was a dark, you know, rather small stature. He had boxed at Oxford and had got his blue, his Oxford blue, was a member of the boxing team at Oxford and then came out to China and rode polo ponies. And it was rather quite a guy around town. And my mother was obviously drawn to him and they were drawn to each other. And she was young. She was a, well, not a teenager at that point, but she was in there, and was 18 or 19. And so they met and and courted, whatever, you know, you do in those years or any time they got to know each other very well and they decided to get married in 1932 and they were married in Shanghai and then they settled into domestic living in Shanghai. [00:07:25][108.5]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:07:27] Wow. You mentioned that seven day plane ride, so you obviously remember it, even though you were quite young. [00:07:34][6.9]

Hugh Barton: [00:07:34] I was five years old, but I remember it. It was quite amazing. We left from Hong Kong and we flew from Hong Kong to Manila to Guam to Wake Island to Midway Island to Honolulu and then finally to San Francisco. And there was a typhoon along the way. So, we were two days holding over, two days in Wake Island. Pan Am in those days, it was a Martin something or other, I can never remember the exact name of the plane, but it was a seaplane. It landed and took off on water, only had 49 passengers and I was the only child on board during it all. So, we all got to know each other pretty well after seven days. And Pan Am had built these series of small, sort of modular hotels on all these islands. And we only flew in the daytime. So it was interesting because we would get up in the morning, have breakfast in the hotel, and then get on the airplane and fly until about 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon. And then we'd land on the next island and it was time for dinner, sleep in the hotel and then get up the next morning, do the same thing over again. Except when we had this typhoon, which held us for a couple of days. So it was a pretty amazing flight. And as the only child on board, so the crew kind of, you know, they had fun with me and made sure I was having a good time. And as a matter of fact, I can remember this very, very easily, when we were coming in to San Francisco the last day of the flight, and it was just turning to dusk, the hostess came back and got me and brought me up to the to the flight deck so I could watch the lights of Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco as we came into the city. And it was very dramatic, I can tell you. And so I do remember that. [00:09:50][135.9]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:09:52] Why was it traumatic? [00:09:52][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [00:09:53] Dramatic, dramatic. [00:09:54][0.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:09:55] Oh, dramatic. [00:09:55][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [00:09:55] Dramatic. Sorry. Not traumatic, no. It was definitely a dramatic scene for a kid. You know, after flying every day. And it was an amazing thing. And my grandfather was there to meet us. And then we got in an old rust bucket, DC three, and flew across the country to, I think we we flew into DC from San Francisco and it was a horrible flight. Bumpy and nasty and horrible. I kept saying, you know, on the other plane was great, you know, no problem. And my grandfather was very upset with me because I was complaining about the flight. [00:10:36][41.3]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:10:38] Yeah. [00:10:38][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [00:10:39] So, yeah. [00:10:39][0.4]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:10:40] Wow. So, all of this at five? [00:10:43][3.2]

Hugh Barton: [00:10:44] Yeah, five. Yeah. [00:10:45][0.7]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:10:46] What's it like to reflect on these early memories?
[00:10:49][2.6]

Hugh Barton: [00:10:49] Well, it's great. You know, these are wonderful stories that I've been telling, you know, to my kids and my friends for years. And every time I tell the stories, it brings back memories. And then, of course, I have to reflect a little bit more on the fact that this was 1940. Then we had Pearl Harbor, and see we flew through Honolulu and Hawaii. It was October 1940. And of course, Pearl Harbor wasn't until December of 1941. So, I mean, it was way before the U.S. got into the war. Anyway, so then I remember the war years. We were living on a farm in Maryland and there was rationing. And my grandfather had retired from the Navy, but was called back because of the war. And my mother took a job in the Treasury Department. With gas rationing they could only afford to drive from the farm into D.C. once a week. And so they had a little apartment up on Argon Place in D.C. and they would drive in on Monday and work through the week. And then on a weekend they'd come back to the farm. And so during the war years, and I was going to school in a small, small village called Galesville on the Chesapeake Bay during the week, and then my mom and my grandfather would come home on the weekends. So it was interesting, though the war years were very interesting. And then after the war, my grandmother and grandfather sold the farm and we moved into D.C. and I lived in Georgetown then for the next number of years.
[00:12:48][118.9]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:12:48] Can you describe your grandparents farm? [00:12:50][1.7]

Hugh Barton: [00:12:51] My grandparents? [00:12:52][0.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:12:53] No, their farm. [00:12:53][0.2]

Hugh Barton: [00:12:55] Oh, the farm. The farm, it was called Larkins Hundred, and it was 100 acres and it was outside, it's about 30 miles from Annapolis. And about a mile and a half, two miles maybe, from Galesville. And it was a tobacco farm. And we had a resident, a farmer, who lived on the property in his own house, and had his own family. His name was Russell. And I'll never forget him because I learned a lot from him during the war years. I helped him in the around the tobacco farm and in tobacco barns. And the poor guy. [laughs] One thing I remember about him is that sometime in his life earlier on, he had blown two fingers off of his hand, holding a shotgun. I don't know how he did it, but anyway, a shotgun went off and took off two of his fingers. And so he was an interesting guy. He taught me how to deal with tobacco worms. He paid me a penny for each one. I would pick them off the tobacco plants and I'd kill them, you know, it's kind of an interesting experience. It was a nice farm, had a beautiful old Georgian style house that we lived in and a long driveway up from the main road. And it was an active tobacco farm. He took care of the tobacco. We cut it and harvested it and hung it in the barns and then put it into what they call hogsheads.

Hogsheads were these big barrels and they packed the tobacco into them. And then we took the barrels and he put them on the wagons. And we, actually with horse drawn wagons, we took them to the auction houses in Upper Marlboro. And that was always a thrill for me. I rode on the on the wagon and then listened to all the auctions went on. And so an interesting, interesting few years from there. And it was those war years. And then from there, as I say, we moved into Georgetown. And my grandmother had actually bought a house in Georgetown before Georgetown was fashionable. It was kind of rundown. It was like the old days here in Alexandria before Old Town became gentrified. Georgetown was that way. And my grandmother, my grandmother's friends, who all lived in Chevy Chase and other parts of Washington, said, "what are you doing buying this old house in Georgetown, for heaven's sakes?" And she said, "well, we just loved the house and we were going to remodel it and we're going to bring it up." And of course that was in the in the thirties. And so now that, you know, everybody knows what's happened to Georgetown in those days since then. So she was way ahead of her time in that way. [00:16:38][222.9]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:16:39] So how old were you when you moved to Georgetown? [00:16:41][2.1]

Hugh Barton: [00:16:42] 11. About 10 or 11. It was after the war. Probably '45 or '46. And lived in Georgetown and went to Landon school. [00:16:51][9.5]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:16:54] Yeah. Really quick before you jump in. Can you talk more about living through the wartime? You mentioned rationing. Can you talk a little bit about that? [00:17:05][10.8]

Hugh Barton: [00:17:07] Well, because we were Navy family, we never really felt the depression. We lived on the farm. We grew our own vegetables. We had chickens. Not everything was rationed, but a lot of things were rationed. Main thing was the gasoline, you know, petrol for the car and that was rationed and various other things. But we were very self-sufficient as far as daily living. And so we never really felt the depression of the of the thirties. And of course I wasn't around for some of that, most of that. I was in China from '35 to '40 and then the war years. And during the war we were only affected by the fact that now my mother's brother was in the Navy and he was in the Pacific. So we were always concerned about him. And he came home a couple of times having had ships shot out from under him, torpedoed from under him, and spending some time in the water. But he survived the war quite well. And, you know, it wasn't a difficult time. It was a nice time. I mean, now you can't say nice because it was a war time, but it was a busy time. And because my grandfather was a graduate of the Naval Academy, so we had a lot of friends from his times and they would come for weekends. So we had busy, busy weekends at the farm. The farm was also on a couple of those garden tours, house and garden tours that were very famous in those days. Busloads of ladies would show up on a Saturday morning. And usually it was a charity involved. There was something that they were involved in, and they were paying money to go on these tours and their money was going to various charities during the war. And my grandmother was always upset because the busses sometimes rode up on her lawn and made great gouges in her lawn. She was upset about that. And another story I'll tell you, this is a kind of an interesting story. Because of our diplomatic business that we'd been in and the diplomatic service, my mother had a lot of friends, especially in the British community here in Washington. And at that time, the ambassador, the British ambassador in D.C. for a number of years during the war was a man named Sir Archibald Clarke Carr, and his wife was named Tita Carr. And she was a good friend of my mother's. And so

one weekend she came down to visit us and she wasn't feeling well. So, she was in her bedroom. And one of these bus tours was coming, and so we put a sign on her bedroom door that said, please do not enter. Whatever, you know, whatever we said. And she stayed in her room, in her bed, while this tour was wandering around the house and the garden. [laughs] And then at one point my mother went to check on her, walked in the door, and there was this fellow, this young man who was a husband of one of the women in the tour, and he had walked in and she had greeted him and he was sitting on the edge of the bed and they were having a jolly old conversation. And my mother said, "AHH! What are you doing?" And Tita said, "No, no problem, no problem. We're having a nice chat." And this guy had no idea he was talking to the wife of the British ambassador. So anyway, that was a sort of a cute story that went on during those interesting years. And so, yeah, that's kind of how it went during the war. [00:21:45][277.8]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:21:46] That's great. Ok. So, you were starting to explain going to school in Georgetown? [00:21:51][5.3]

Hugh Barton: [00:21:52] Yeah. We went to Georgetown and I went to Landon School, which is a private school out in Chevy Chase. No, it was in Bethesda, Maryland. And it was a school bus, and a school bus picked me up. And we had a couple of other guys who lived in the neighborhood who were also in the school. And I went to Landon for about three or four years. And then my British family, my father's brother, who was also named Hugh, I was named for him. He was Hugh Barton. He kind of took me under his wing from the point of view of stepping in for his brother, who was deceased. And they decided that the schools that I was going to were perfectly fine, but I was not getting a so-called British education. And they said I really should get a taste of a British education. So it was not viable at that time to go to England, go back to England and go to school in in the U.K. But they found a school in Canada, just outside Buffalo and Niagara Falls called Ridley College. And the education there was exactly the same as at the top schools in England like Eton and Harrow and whatever. So, the education was based on the British style of education. So, they persuaded my mother to let me go. So, I went to boarding school for four years in Canada, and I loved it. It was absolutely wonderful. It was all boys school at that time. And it's now co-ed, which was quite a surprise when I went back there for a reunion one year. Anyway, it was an all boys school and it had a lower school and a middle school and an upper school, and the upper school was like high school. And I think I had one year in middle school and then my whole high school career was up there as a boarder. And I had friends from all over the world who were there. And it had tremendous sports activities. I played hockey, learned how to play hockey, which in those days was not that big a deal in the United States. It was a big deal in Canada. And so I got to play hockey. I played cricket. I loved that, too. Definitely nothing like that was going on in the U.S. And so I played cricket and played hockey and got involved in amateur dramatics and had a good education. I would say that of all the various academic activities I've had in these 88 years, my four years at Ridley College in Katherine, Ontario, Canada, was the most helpful to me in my career and in my years. And it was it was a great education and I made a lot of friends, some of whom are still alive. And I learned a lot. I learned a lot about Canada. You know, we're talking about the fact that Americans don't know much about Canadian history. And I learned a little bit more about Canadian history there than I would have learned if I'd been in high school here in Washington or in Alexandria. So that was a good time in my years. And it was very international because the kids, a lot of the kids in the school were from all over the world. [00:26:19][267.4]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:26:20] Mm hmm. And so after you finished high school where did you go? [00:26:24][3.8]

Hugh Barton: [00:26:26] Finished high school. I went to Colgate University in upper New York State. And that was okay. I was only there for a couple of years. Didn't really get into college life. Because of my years at Ridley, I was more advanced academically than most of my classmates in college. When I went to college, it was almost like I had skipped freshman year, you know. But anyway, so it was not a great experience. So I really wanted to get going. I had decided on my career of journalism and I had taken a lot of courses and I had some intern experience and I really wanted to get at it. And Colgate was great, but it was very, sort of semi Ivy League. "Hail fellow, well met," a pat on the back fraternity life type of thing, and it just didn't suit me very well. So, I wanted to get going. So that's when I came back home to Washington. I was still living in Georgetown, with my mother and my grandmother and I took some more journalism courses at George Washington here in D.C. And through that, I got an internship at the old Washington Evening Star, which is no longer around, unfortunately. But it was a wonderful newspaper. And it was the afternoon, the evening paper, The Washington Post was the morning paper. And there was four other papers at that time. There was Daily News and another Scripps Howard paper. So, there were four active daily newspapers in Washington at that time. This was the early fifties, and we're talking 1952, 1953, that era. And again, through my contacts at George Washington, I was able to get a job as a copy boy at the Evening Star, which was a wonderful paper. And I made a lot of friends there. And that was my first experience with Alexandria because some of my fellow copy boys lived in Alexandria and commuted to the paper from Alexandria. And so a couple of times I would come back down here, come back to Alexandria for parties and things like that that went on here. And so that was my early journalist journalism career. This is the early to mid fifties. [00:29:38][192.1]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:29:39] So, can you described what Alexandria was like when you were coming down.? [00:29:43][3.8]

Hugh Barton: [00:29:43] Yeah. Yeah. I remember it fondly. I had a couple of girlfriends that lived in Hunting Towers. Hunting Towers, which was full of airline young ladies there. And I noticed going by there the other day that it's no longer there, but there was a little cafe in the courtyard out, you know, separate from the from the Hunting Towers building. But I'm sure old timers would remember that there was this little, little cafe that with coffee and bakery stuff, and we used to hang out kind of there. And then we would meet the young ladies from Hunting Towers. And so I had a couple of a couple of girlfriends who lived there. And as a matter of fact, the woman I eventually married, I met at Hunting Tower. She was living there with a couple of her other friends, and she worked for United Airlines. Anyway, so I was coming to Alexandria. We had friends. I had friends, and there were a couple of epic, epic parties in Ramsay Alley. Right across from City Hall. A friend, oh god, what was his name? Johnny? Anyway, Johnny something I can't remember now [laughs] had an apartment there. And there were quite a few, quite a few parties there. And we got a few beers there from time to time. And I met a lot of interesting people, including at that time a man named Johnny Phillips. And a friend of mine, another friend of mine, taught Johnny Phillips while we were sitting there at a party, was teaching him how to play the guitar. And Johnny Phillips went on to become, he was in The Mamas and the Papas, which I don't know if you all remember, but it was a pretty popular group in those days. And Johnny learned to play the guitar at parties that I was at in Alexandria. So, little known stuff about Alexander in those days. And so that's where, and as I said, and Old Town was very much like old Georgetown. I mean, it was before things really got, it was a

lot of it was a lot of industrial, you know, along the waterfront that's not there now. And, you know, it was a busy, busy city. I remember City Hall and shops up and down King Street. But nothing, you know, I mean, it was really early, early days and this is the mid to late fifties. And then and I'm still living in Georgetown, but I'm still working for the newspaper and I'm coming to Alexandria every once in a while. And then I got drafted. Flew a 1959. Uncle Sam came along and and my draft number came up. So, I went into the army and went to boot camp in Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. [00:33:23][220.5]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:33:25] Yeah. Can you quickly talk more about being drafted? When you first received the letter? [00:33:32][7.1]

Hugh Barton: [00:33:34] Yeah. It was not a big deal in those days. I mean, it was a big deal for me personally, but it was not a big deal. The government was drafting people for the so-called war in Korea. Korean War was going on. So, they were still drafting people into the army. And so it was not a surprise. I was in the age group and I didn't have any dependents or whatever. And I wasn't in college. So, I was red meat for the draft service. But, I ended up having a very good experience and I'll go into that if you want to at this point. I went to Fort Jackson for boot camp and then they sent me to Fort Holabird in Baltimore, which is again not there anymore. But Fort Holabird was where they taught counterintelligence. And so I went into the counterintelligence business in the army, again, as a low level private, you know, and that was interesting. It was about ten or 12 weeks of training in this work. And then at the end of the training, we got our assignments. And I think I was in a class of about 50 guys, and 48 of them were sent to Korea and two of us were sent to Germany. And that was a great experience. So we were very fortunate. So there's the one other fellow in my class and we ended up going to Frankfurt, which was the main headquarters at that time of the U.S. Army. And I had done a year and a half, almost 2 full years of service. And again, standing in front of the commanding officer in Frankfurt. He said, "okay, one of you is going to stay here and one of you is going to go to another place north of here. What do you want to do?" Well, neither one of us knew anything about either place. So it was almost a coin flip, but it wasn't. I had heard from my friends to stay away from headquarters. So I said, "I'll take the other place." And my friend said, "That's right. I'll stay here." The other place turned out to be a small German town called Giessen, and Giessen is about 35, 40 miles north of Frankfurt on the Autobahn. And it was an Army post. It was an Army post, young G.I.s in the service were posted there. But I was with this small counterintelligence group, I ran the motor pool and locked up the files at night and did the paperwork. And there were 13 of us in the group, and all the others were native German speakers and were involved in an actual counterintelligence work. And I was just the clerk, basically. But we were living in a house in the community and the officers were on the ground floor. We had some interrogation rooms down in the basement, and then there was the next floor. There was a living room and a kitchen. And then above was several bedrooms. And I lived in one of those bedrooms because all the other guys were married and lived on the economy. And so I had this house. We were in civilian clothes. I hardly ever wore uniform the entire time I was in Germany, only civilian clothes. And we had haushälterin, which there's a woman that came in and cleaned the house and made the beds. And I mean, it was quite a time to be, it was quite an experience being in the Army. Fascinating. And of course, I had the opportunity to travel and we would go off to Amsterdam for the weekend and my family came to Naples. That's another story. But anyway, they came over to Naples for a couple of months one Christmas, the Christmas that I was there, or one of the Christmases I was there. So, I went down there and spent a few weeks there, ten days with my family, my mother and my grandmother and my aunt and various other people. Anyway. So that was

a good experience. And interestingly, I was in Germany the exact same time as Elvis Presley, and he was a mail clerk at down in Wiesbaden, which is not too far from me. And he was there and he kept his nose clean as far as like we never heard a bad thing about him getting in trouble or anything. He just put his nose to the grindstone and did his job. His father, unfortunately, did not do so well. He came over and Elvis gave him a Mercedes and he went out on the Autobahn and wrecked it very quickly after he got there. So Elvis sent him home. And it turned out that same time that I was there and Elvis was there, Barbara, my current wife, Barbara, who is also a part of this program, her brother was there. He's a musician and he was in the U.S. Army Orchestra, concert orchestra. They traveled around giving concerts as a sort of a morale thing and a wave-the-flag thing. And he was stationed in down in Bavaria. But we never, obviously didn't know him that time. But we, you know, talked about it much later anyway. So that was my experience with Uncle Sam. And that was from '59 to '60, '61 and got out and came back to this country, came back to to D.C., to Georgetown. And then soon after that, I had been dating before I left for Germany, and then communicating during the time I was there with the young lady that I had met at Hunting Towers, whose name was Karen McCauley. And so soon after I got out of the service, we got married. We got married in April of 1961. In the meantime, I think in 1960, my mother, not my grandmother at this time, but my mother, my grandmother was the one who bought houses and flipped them and sold them. And she had done this two or three times in Georgetown. Anyway, my mother had bought a house in Alexandria, much to my surprise, and it was a it was on Prince Street by the firehouse in the 300 block, and it had three apartments. So when I got married, we moved into Alexandria.

[00:42:23][528.4]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:42:24] So this is 1960s? [00:42:25][0.7]

Hugh Barton: [00:42:26] This is 1961. 1961. We got married in April of 1961 and moved right into Prince Street. The Evening Star, because I had been drafted, The Evening Star was required to rehire me, you know, when I got out. So I was I was pretty sure that I was just going to go back to work with the Star and go through and become a reporter, you know, and work my way through that. But in the meantime, one of my friends from Alexandria days, whose name was Dicky Wright. And Dicky said, "hey, wait a minute," we were having a drink before I decided what I was going to do. He said, You know, my dad has this newspaper in Alexandria called the Alexandria Gazette and," no, not the Gazette. Alexandria... I'll think of it in a minute. Anyway, "it's a weekly newspaper in Alexandria, mostly advertising. But he likes to have the front page and the back page look like a regular newspaper with actual news on it and pictures and stuff about what's going on in town." And he said "the current editor is about to retire." He said, "maybe you can get a job with my dad." His dad's name was Dick Wright. And so I came over to Alexandria and sat down with Dicky's dad, Dick Wright, and by golly, he hired me. So, I never did go back to the star. So, my mother had bought this house in Alexandria, and all of a sudden here, I got a job in Alexandria. Just a side note, the because some of the old timers might remember him, the editor of the paper that I replaced his name is Winder Harris. And Winder Harris had been a prominent legislator in Virginia politics, a member of the Byrd machine, and he had been a journalist also. And he was a wonderful guy. And I spent some time with him before I took over his job. And he was an amazing character and I never knew what happened to him after he retired, I think he moved his family into some other part of Virginia. But he was a very interesting guy. And I don't suppose there are many people who remember much about him, but he was a great guy. And so I took over as editor of this Alexandria paper, and there was just me and then a couple of guys selling advertising. And the print shop was on Fairfax a couple of blocks from the city hall. And I don't know what's there now. I can't

remember. I've been by there. It's a sort of a commercial building on the corner of Fairfax and something or other. Anyway, worked there, lived on Prince Street with my wife Karen. And then... [00:46:15][228.3]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:46:16] Do you remember the address? [00:46:16][0.1]

Hugh Barton: [00:46:17] It's three something, on the 300 block of Prince Street. Say almost next door to the firehouse. And I don't remember the exact number on Prince Street. There were three apartments and we were in the second floor and the bottom floor was rented to a nice guy named Art something, I can't remember his name now. And the top floor was almost constantly rented to some airline young ladies, and they kept rotating. And my mother was always complaining that men took care of apartments much better than ladies, young ladies did. Because every time they moved, she'd have to go in there and do a thorough cleaning and she was not happy with them. Anyway, side story. Anyway, so lived there and then in late 1961, we hadn't been there that long. My uncle, Hugh Barton, who was at this point a senior executive with a company called Jardine Matheson, which is a well-known British trading firm. And he was the head guy for Jardines in Hong Kong. He had been in Shanghai, but now he was in Hong Kong with his family. He came through Alexandria for a couple of days on a trip. He'd been to New York. He was thinking about financing a new hotel in Hong Kong. So he was talking to the finance people in New York and to the companies like Hilton and some of the other major international hotel chains. And he'd been with them for a couple of days. So, he came down to spend a couple of days with us. And in the course of the conversation he said, "how would you like to come to Hong Kong to work for a newspaper?" And I said, "Sounds pretty good to me." And he said, "Well, I'll think about it." So he went back and about two months later, I got this letter from the publisher of the South China Morning Post saying, "your uncle tells me you're interested and here's a contract." And this wonderful contract that came with travel from D.C. to Hong Kong, with an apartment for my family, with a salary that was pretty good in those days for my age group and all, you know, all these various different perks. So I talked to my wife, Karen, in those days, and I said, "what do you think?" And we had this small child, my oldest son. And she said, "yeah, why not?" She'd been in the airline business. So travel was not a, you know, a big problem to her. So I accepted the contract and I signed up and in 1962, yeah, '62, I went out first to get settled and went to Hong Kong, started work at the South China Morning Post. And then she came along about a month later after I had gotten settled and gotten into the apartment and hired people and whatever. So that was another big move in my life, to Hong Kong. And we were in Hong Kong for ten years, starting out with the South China Morning post, and then about 1965 the Hong Kong government had decided to get into the tourism and travel business. Because all of a sudden, they realized that they were sitting on a goldmine of an attraction. And it was a movie called *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* with Bill Holden that really got them excited about travel from the U.S. to Hong Kong, because the movie was so popular. So, they had attracted a convention, the A.S.T.A Convention, American Society of Travel Agents Convention, which moved around the world but had never been to Hong Kong, it was attracted to come to Hong Kong in 1965 to have their annual convention. Well, the folks in Hong Kong didn't really know what was going to happen with a bunch of American travel agents running around town. So, they went to my boss at the paper and said, "we want to borrow him during this time of this convention and maybe for a little bit later." So they had this wonderful, wonderful British term called seconding. And I don't think we use it in this country, but I was seconded from the South China Morning Post to the Hong Kong government for I think two months to start with. And I came in and I helped them put on this convention dealing with the American travel agents. And it was very successful, obviously,

and the travel agents loved it and they had a fabulous time. And we put them in places like the Peninsula Hotel where they were met at the airport with Mercedes-Benz, with liveried chauffeurs. And I mean, Hong Kong, in those days, we could really put on a show, and we did [laughs] for our visiting travel people. So then at the end of the two months, I was supposed to go back to the South China morning post and I said, "wait a minute, this is pretty good stuff. I kind of like this." So first of all, the people in Hong Kong said, "yeah, we'd love to have you full time." And I went back to my boss at the South China Morning Post and said, "What do you think? You know? They want me there and I'd like to stay there." And everything was the same. They just transferred my contract to the Hong Kong government. And so that's the beginning of my travel industry career. In 1965 with the A.S.T.A Convention in Hong Kong. And I've been in that business ever since. [00:54:18][480.7]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:54:19] Really quick, let's go back a little bit. So, when you were working for the newspaper in Alexandria, what were stories that you were working on? [00:54:29][9.2]

Hugh Barton: [00:54:29] Well, it was just day-to-day stuff. City Hall, I covered the City Hall. City council meetings. Urban redevelopment was one of the major political things going on in Alexandria at that time. There were people who said, "let's tear everything down and rebuild it." And there were people saying, "no, no, no, save this, save that." And so that was the sort of major political development slash development activity going on. And in those days and of course, remember, I was only in that job for maybe a year, but not much more than that. And so I think the mayor at that time was Leroy, starts with a B, I can't remember, the mayor. And so all of those people are gone now that were there when I was there in that period of time. And Alexandria it was, life was slow and nice and fun. And there were not a lot, there were a couple of restaurants. Seashore? No, not seashore. There was one major restaurant where the McDonald's is now on the corner of King and... In front of the torpedo factory. Torpedo factory. And the torpedo factory was not there. I mean, it was there, the building was there, but hadn't been turned into an art place. And there was this one decent restaurant on that corner and another one up in the north end. I remember it was good. But I mean, it was nothing, nothing. King Street activity was like just some regular shops and things like that. But nothing, nothing exciting. And as I say, the waterfront hadn't been developed. You know, it just hadn't turned into what it is, anything close to what it is now. [00:57:07][158.2]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:57:08] Do you remember reporting on the on urban renewal in the city? Like are there people you remember who you interviewed or spoke to for the stories? [00:57:19][11.3]

Hugh Barton: [00:57:20] Yeah, I don't remember the people. I don't remember, but I remember the urban renewal was, you're right, was the big, big stuff when I went to city council meetings. And I talked to various city council people involved and other government leaders. But I just did my job and took pictures and talked to people. And of course, as I say, our paper, the paper was a weekly and it was a throwaway. [00:58:03][42.8]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:58:05] Do you remember what the paper was called? [00:58:06][0.9]

Hugh Barton: [00:58:07] It was Alexandria... Isn't that terrible? Can't remember. [00:58:15][8.1]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:58:16] It's ok. [00:58:16][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [00:58:18] But it was kind of interesting because it was a weekly and it came out on Wednesday night. And on Thursday morning we had a guy that worked for the company and he had this big van and he he would drive down to downtown D.C. and he had a place that he went, and these guys that were there, kind of down and out, guys who are always looking for something to do, and he picked them up in the same spot in downtown D.C. every week. They were always there for him. And he picked up about eight or ten of them. And you'd bring them back to Alexandria and they would load up the van with papers. And he drove all over town, dropping these guys off with papers. And they would go door to door and everybody got a paper. And then at the end of the day, all the guys would get back in the van and he'd drive them back downtown and pay them. I don't know what he paid him. Maybe 25 bucks a day. I don't know what he paid in those days, but whatever it was, they were happy to have it. And they all did a good job. You know, everybody was saying, well, you know, maybe they think they could throw the papers away. You'd never know. But no, they checked up on them and they found that they were all trustworthy. And so, I'll think of the name of the paper in a minute. [00:59:51][92.5]

Francesco De Salvatore: [00:59:51] Was it called the Alexandria Journal? [00:59:52][1.3]

Hugh Barton: [00:59:54] Yes! Yes, exactly. Journal. That's it. That was it. The Alexandria Journal. And the Gazette was an actual, I guess it was a daily at that time, and we were not anymore. Anyway, it was an interesting experience in Alexandria in those days, but it was nothing like... You know, I didn't live here that long in that that time. To really get to know it too well. [01:00:21][27.3]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:00:22] So when did you return to Northern Virginia after your time abroad? [01:00:24][2.8]

Hugh Barton: [01:00:25] Okay. From Hong Kong, we were there ten years. And then my kids, I have three boys and two of my boys were born in Hong Kong. And the one I took with me when we first went out. And they were getting to the age where Hong Kong was a great place for young, young kids because we had servants and they took care of the kids. And it was a very easy life. My wife worked for was in public relations, worked for the Hilton Hotel, and I was working for the government. But at by the early 1970s, we were getting to the point where the kids really needed more space. Hong Kong was wonderful when they were little, but they needed to get out and about. And I had a friend we'd had for many, many years, an American friend who used to come to Hong Kong all the time. He stayed at the Hilton until we got to know him. And we were talking to him one night, saying we were thinking about going back, coming back to the states at that time. And he said, "well, look," he says, "I got this little business out on Guam." He said, "I'm looking for a manager, so why don't you think about that?" So we thought about a little bit, didn't think much more of it. And then one day he said, "well, let's fly over for the weekend." So we ended up flying, leaving the kids behind, we flew to Guam. And he put on a show. Showed us how we would live and he showed us the school the kids would go to, took us to the station. We met a lot of the guys, people at the station. And it was just a great deal. So we agreed and I signed the contract. And so in 1972 we packed our bags and left Hong Kong, baggage and three kids and moved to Guam. And that was another great experience because then I ran a radio. It was a radio, AM, FM, TV, and the whole thing was in a whole Quonset hut that had been restored. And we also had a fun little airline. So we had a thing called Air Pacific with one airplane, seven passengers, and it flew from Guam to Saipan. And we did a lot of medevacs from the small islands in the area. So over the years that I was there, I got to Yap and Pohnpei and a lot of very interesting places in that part of the world anyway.

When I got to Guam, I took over as the general manager of the station and the airline, but everything was running pretty good. I didn't really have a lot to do. I got involved in the community to help sort of public relations for the for the station. So, I am a member of the Guam Rotary Club, my first shot in the Rotary, which I have now been in for 52 years. Anyway, and then the governor of Guam at that time also felt that because I'd been in tourism in Hong Kong, he said, "I know you can help me here." So he put me on the Guam Visitor's Board as a director, and I helped Guam develop their early tourist business, which was fascinating. So, I spent more time doing that than running the station because the station kind of ran itself. And there's some funny stories about the station. But, because it was in Quonset hut, you're talking about noise. When it rained and we were on the air, we had a few live shows, a lot of it was was taped, but we did have a few live shows. We brought our television in. We had a taping situation outside of San Francisco Airport. And they would tape all the time. ABC, NBC, CBS. We had a contract with DHL, the delivery people. They would pick up the tapes, go to this airport, fly to Honolulu, give the tapes to somebody who I think was on Continental, and they would fly him to Guam and then we'd get these tapes. And if a show was on in San Francisco on a monday night, we would show it the following Monday night, same time frame but a week late. Except for the Walter Cronkite news. And my boss was absolutely ferocious about Walter Cronkite and the I guess it was CBS News. So, as soon as the tape arrived from this trip across the Pacific, he put it on [unintelligible], and then we would run it two or three times. Anyway, that was fascinating. But the main, real main thing that we did on Guam that we were so excited about was helping them develop the tourism industry. And of course, in those days what we did was fasten on the Japanese market because they were close by, 2 hours flight to Tokyo and Japanese were aching to travel. They had been held back for so long. They were really ready to travel, but they were only allowed to take \$500 out of the country. So they were very restricted on where they could go. And Guam fit the bill. So we really we did a big job on on that.

[01:07:10][404.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:07:13] So then when did you end up in Northern Virginia?

[01:07:15][2.9]

Hugh Barton: [01:07:16] Okay. And after Guam, there for four years, and then we decided we really had to get back here. So, we came back to this country and my grandmother had this house in Virginia Beach, so we moved to Virginia Beach. So I was in Virginia Beach. I worked for the city of Virginia Beach again in tourism development sales or sales and marketing for conferences and conventions, and worked a lot with all the Virginia destinations. So, I started working with with Alexandria and Arlington and Fairfax County and Richmond to promote Virginia. Because the idea was get them into Virginia, and then from there you get into into these other areas. And my kids were living on the beach and having a wonderful time going to good schools. But I didn't get back up here until my then wife and I divorced and I moved up here in 1994. And so, you know, I've been here ever since, from 1994. [01:08:42][86.5]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:08:44] How did you find it when you came in '94? [01:08:47][2.7]

Hugh Barton: [01:08:49] Well, you know, I'd been back home on leave, so I knew things were going on here. And of course, when I came back in '75 to Virginia Beach, I would come up here on business quite a bit. So, I knew what was going on in Northern Virginia and in Alexandria before I came up. I came back permanently in '94. And so it was not unknown to me. And of course, I'd seen a lot of development over those years. Because even when I was in Hong Kong, I came back

on home leave a couple of times, and would go through here. Would usually fly into Dulles and spend a few days here and then go back to the beach, something like that. Anyway, so I knew what was going on here, so it was not totally foreign. And I've been here ever since. And when I went to work, I actually got a job in Arlington. I was working for the Arlington County government in destination marketing and ran the convention bureau to promote Arlington. But all the time I was working for Arlington I was living here in a townhouse on Barrister Place off of N. Van dorn, and that's when I married Barbara. And she was living in that house, so I moved in with her in '94 and then we moved here to the Olympus in 2004. 2005. Yeah. [01:10:47][118.4]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:10:49] Yeah. So, can you say more about what you observed happening in Alexandria in the nineties? [01:10:55][5.7]

Hugh Barton: [01:10:57] In the nineties... [01:10:58][1.4]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:10:57] Well... [01:10:57][0.0]

Hugh Barton: [01:10:58] In the nineties. Yeah. Well, you know, very progressive. In my business, in the travel industry, Alexandria was a hotspot. Because the Alexandria commercial development area had made a big push to get associations to put their headquarters and put their offices into Alexandria. So, Alexandria was was a hotspot for promotion of the conference and convention business. And of course by that time the restaurants, and I mean King Street, was starting to really cook. And they hadn't started working on the waterfront yet but it was a pretty lively place in the nineties. And we got to know, you know, a lot of folks. And that's when we first got involved with Gadsby's Tavern. Barbara had been involved with it. She ran the convention bureau here while I was running the one in Arlington. So, we did a lot of shows together, and we traveled together around the country to promote Northern Virginia. And, as I say, [pause]I got lost here for a minute. Go ahead [01:12:39][100.8]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:12:42] I was going to ask a question. What were the selling points that you would use to... [01:12:46][4.5]

Hugh Barton: [01:12:48] To promote this area? [01:12:49][1.1]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:12:49] Northern Virginia. [01:12:49][0.4]

Hugh Barton: [01:12:51] Well, of course, the number one selling point was its proximity to D.C.. You know, with all the museums and the Smithsonian's and the attractions of D.C. and the monuments. And we were here, we were close by. We had, you know, lots of hotels. We had more hotels in Arlington than they had in Alexandria at that time. And so it was a easy sell to get people from all over the country to travel to Washington, D.C., and also internationally, we did a lot of international shows. And again, everybody wanted to come to D.C., but we we showed them the attractiveness of staying in hotels in Alexandria and Arlington and Fairfax County to a certain extent. And Arlington had the extra advantage of having a lot of hotels that promoted their business during the week. Tourists, travelers came in the weekend. But during the week we had businesspeople coming again from all over the country to sell and promote and market in D.C. So, we had the advantage of having people here year round and through the week. And Arlington for many years and still maybe even, you know, everything went right down the down the drain in the

pandemic. But I think it still is number one tax revenue producer in the state and hotel revenue. And for years, people think of Virginia Beach, I think of Richmond, but it's been Northern Virginia has been the main producer of revenue. [01:15:04][132.8]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:15:06] Interesting. I have some closing questions, but is there anything I haven't asked you that you want to speak about? [01:15:11][4.8]

Hugh Barton: [01:15:13] No. I just might mention that I've been very happy. My I have three sons and they're all over in different parts of the world. Two of them are still in Virginia Beach, at the beach, and one is in Austin, Texas. And I'm very proud of what they're doing. And I have eight grandchildren, and I'm very pleased with them. I think because we did so much travel when their kids are young that they love to move around. So, I have one granddaughter who graduated from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. I have another granddaughter who graduated from a college outside of Sydney in Australia, and two granddaughters right now are really living and working in the UK. And then from the boy side, I have a grandson who is a professional surfer and he's doing very well and until he recently banged his knee up in the Barbados in a competition. But he'll be back in the water in September. So, I just I would like to mention them. [01:16:38][85.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:16:40] What are your three sons names? [01:16:41][0.8]

Hugh Barton: [01:16:42] Hugh Junior is my oldest son and he's in Austin, Texas. And my middle son is named Pat. Patrick, called Pat. He's in the real estate business in Virginia Beach. And my youngest is James, named after my father. He's been called James all his life. Nobody ever says Jim or Jamie or Jimmy. He's just James. And James again lives in Virginia Beach and has a pool business and is very active outdoors and doing a great job. So Hugh, Pat and James are the boys names. [01:17:24][41.3]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:17:24] What do you what do you hope for your three sons? [01:17:26][2.0]

Hugh Barton: [01:17:28] What I hope for? I hope they're healthy and doing well. And I think right now we're very fortunate in that they have their health and they're doing well and they're happy. And I have the best three daughters in law you ever could imagine. Three out of three ain't bad, you know. [laughs] So anyway, and my grandkids are great. So, yeah, I'm pretty pleased with that. [01:18:03][35.6]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:18:03] What do you hope for your grandchildren? [01:18:05][1.1]

Hugh Barton: [01:18:06] My grandchildren? Well, again, they're a diverse lot. They're all going in different directions. And I'm hoping that their peers, their age group can do something about what we're going through right now with the climate problems and the political problems. They all have their heads on straight. And, you know, what we all hope for these days. Peace in some way and get along with people and do something about the climate. And we've seen that it's been such a horrendous time we've had recently with all the different climate problems. Anyway, that's what I'm looking forward to. [01:19:02][56.0]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:19:04] Well, thanks for speaking with me today, Mr. Burton.
[01:19:06][2.0]

Hugh Barton: [01:19:06] Well, it's been a great pleasure, and I think it's a great effort of the city. I mean, I might just mention I'm, you know, Barbara and I served on the Gadsby's board. We've served on the board with the MetroStage and so we've been very involved in the civic life of Alexandria. When we were really active in business, we were members of the West End Business Association. But since the pandemic, our Italian business has kind of fallen off. So, we're not that active in business. But we're still active, I'm very active, again, with the Arlington Rotary Club, involved in a lot of things, and I'm known as Mr. Blood. I've been donating blood myself since 1962. And everywhere I go, I try to set up blood donation drives. I've done that with my Rotary Club and I've done that with the church that we belong to. And it's my sort of fixation that I have because I think it's the best thing that anybody can do for their fellow man is to donate blood. And it's so easy, you know, and it's such an easy thing to do and it doesn't cost you anything. I first started giving blood in Hong Kong to the British Red Cross, and they were so desperate that we would give blood and then they would give you all the beer you could drink. [laughs] And now you get some soft drinks and and crackers and, you know. So, we're still very, very much involved in the civic life in Alexandria and want to continue to be. [01:21:18][132.2]

Francesco De Salvatore: [01:21:20] Great. Well, thank you, Mr. Burton. Thank you. [01:21:22][1.5]

Hugh Barton: [01:21:22] Thank you.