

East Brandywine Township Oral History Project

Interviewer(s): Alexandria Proko and Carol Schmidt

Interviewee: Joan Stanford

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Allie: So, we have Joan Stanford here for our East Brandywine Township Historical Commission's Oral History Project. Let's start by having you tell us a little about yourself and your family.

Joan: My maiden name is Joan Miley. We moved into East Brandywine when I was four years old, in 1942. My parents ended up owning that house for fifty years. I was the oldest, so I was already here. My brother Larry was only a few months old when we moved in. Larry Miley, I think everybody in the township knows Larry Miley.

Laughter

Joan: So then, after we live there a few years, brother Fred and sister Joyce came along. That pretty much was all of us that grew up there through the years that they owned the house. What we did and how we lived was very simple. It was a little house, right across from Bollinger Road where Applecross is located. Bollinger Road was a dirt road for years and years. I think it was still dirt by the time that I married and moved away, then finally they made it a regular road. (Note: The house Joan is describing has been demolished for a development since the interview.)

Carol: Yes, they paved it.

Joan: Yes, paved it later. Basically, our mother would turn us out in the morning—I'm talking about summertime now—and we'd come back for lunch and disappear again until dinnertime. Nobody knew what we were doing or where we were, which was mostly hanging along the creek in the meadow. We lived right next to the Watter's farm.

Allie: Oh, okay.

Joan: There was an old apple orchard between our house and their house, and behind the woods there was a small stream and a springhouse. I was always taking home watercress for my dad because he loved it. We'd go down there and play all day long, making waterfalls and all kinds of stuff, just playing in the creek like kids do. On beyond that, there was another farm, but we never ventured any further than that when we were little. It was the Hershey farm. I think it was a nut tree farm.

Carol: Yes, it would have been behind Guthriesville Road.

Joan: Oh, okay, right. It looks into that road. I used to pick berries for him in the summertime. I would get up early in the morning, sunrise really, and walk. Everywhere we went, we walked. Is it Guthriesville Road?

Carol: North Guthriesville Road.

Allie: That's where the Timberlake community is? My grandmother's house backed up to that farm.

Joan: Yes, that was his farm. I would walk over there and pick berries in the early morning hours. I was one of the better pickers if I do say so myself.

Carol: So, what all did they grow there?

Joan: I know that he had nut trees and that sort of thing, but I just had to deal with the berries. I imagine he had strawberries and that sort of thing.

Allie: Was that something you applied to as a job, as a child?

Joan: I guess you could say that. They wanted people to help pick berries. There really wasn't, in the area, jobs that young people, teenagers could do. The other job I would have in the summer was at

Speakman's. Just on the other side of Little Washington, crossroad. On the left there's a pond. Well, that was called Speakman's Farm, and I worked there picking the tomatoes and potatoes when they came in too. I didn't like that much. It was just too hot, and I almost had sunstroke one time.

Allie: Oh, gosh!

Joan: You had to walk, and I think that's a good mile or two from where we lived to Speakman's. We did swim in that pond at times.

Carol: And skate there too.

Joan: Yeah, they had a raft out in the middle and you could go over and swim in the summer. Nobody had swimming pools. We swam in the Brandywine Creek all the time too, behind the store (Lyndell Store).

Carol: Do you know where the Guthriesville Service Center is? Right next to it, that pond is the one she's talking about.

Allie: The one that sits back a little?

Joan: That was the main one.

Allie: That is sort of a hike.

Joan: Yeah. I don't know who lives on that farm now. Or even if anyone does. So many places look like they're vacant. In fact, our old house doesn't look like anyone is living in it either.

Carol: Oh, really?

Joan: It doesn't look like it. No activity there. Dad always used to keep that bank trimmed nicely all the time, and it's all grown up in weeds now. It doesn't look nearly as nice as it used to.

Allie: I didn't know any of that!

Joan: That house where I grew up is way down, you know, the driveway is really steep? That wasn't that way it was in the early '40s and before that. It was right along the road but they didn't like the dip in 322 I guess from Watter's house and down, so they filled that all in to level 322 out.

Carol: Oh, I didn't know that.

Joan: That little house had been a store at one time.

Carol: No kidding!

Joan: Yes, as I said, it was right along the road, on 322 level with the road. They did come and offered my parents to pay for the road frontage they needed to build the road up.

Carol: So, the road actually dipped down? The house was level?

Joan: It dipped down, yeah. It became more difficult to get in and out of there though, that's for sure.

Laughter

Carol: I didn't know that.

Joan: It wasn't a real plush house by any means, but it had been a store, as I said, and in between the kitchen and living room there had been a window, which I guess they handed things out through when they sold whatever they sold.

Carol: Oh!

Joan: When we bought it, it was owned by a little old woman. Her name was Keers, I think. She was a widow and I think it had just gotten to be too much to take care of and the two acres that went with it.

Carol: I remember you had a big garden.

Joan: Oh, yes. Ever since we lived there, that's what we lived on. Dad had the garden, and my mother had chickens in the back. We always had eggs and chickens, and every spring she would order a hundred baby chicks. They would come in the mail. When the mailman delivered them, she would open it really fast because it was hot and the poor little things were panting and so she'd revive them all with water. We raised them until they got to be what we'd call pullet size. Through the summer they got to be a nice size, and I hate to tell you, we'd kill them all for the freezer.

Laughter

Allie: My grandparents lived off of North Guthriesville Road. They used to do the same thing.

Joan: What was their last name?

Allie: Paiva. Catherine and Thurmon.

Joan: I know that the Well's family had a house, a big house on the right, sitting back a bit from the road. Jimmy Wells went to school with us.

Carol: Your grandparents built that house, right?

Allie: I don't think so. They moved from Levittown to that home. Coming from Levittown, which the houses were so on top of each other, they were moving to the country and he did the same. My mom has stories of having ducks and she'd become attached to them, and my grandmother would laugh and at dinner tell her who she was eating. It sounds horrible, she had a sick sense of humor. That's life though. When you have a little farm like that, and you're doing it to sustain yourself.

Joan: Right. We pretty much sustained ourselves from the garden, and my mother was always putting the preserves and stuff with the garden and her chickens.

Carol: Did your dad work somewhere else?

Joan: Yes, at the time they actually moved to East Brandywine, dad was working for the Downingtown Paper Mill. My family was originally from Lancaster, but they moved to Downingtown when my dad was ten. Dads' father, my grandfather, also worked in Downingtown at that time, and he was also the first band director for the Downingtown High School Band.

Allie: Wow!

Joan: He also gave music lessons to the kids.

Allie: What was his name?

Joan: Amos L. Miley. In fact, the Miley's go back to 1710 when they settled in Lancaster County. They were a group from Switzerland and got a Penn grant for 10,000 acres in Lancaster. You don't really want me to get into all the Lancaster stuff, do you?

Laughter

Allie: It's still interesting!

Joan: Anyway, after my father's family moved into Downingtown and my father grew up and met my mother, they married, and my parents bought the house in East Brandywine. I was four and my brother a few months old at that time.

Carol: Did your mother grow up in Downingtown?

Joan: No, her father's family came over from Germany and settled where the airport is, (BWI) he had a hundred-acre farm, and when they wanted to put the airport in, they took that. Then they moved to Pennsylvania for a number of years—that's when my mother and her brothers and sisters were born. My grandmother died suddenly, and after she died, my grandfather moved back to Baltimore again, or in that area. He had been told that Pennsylvania farming was so much better and

everything just grew naturally; well, he found out it wasn't any different from down there, and he wanted to go back.

Laughter

Joan: So, it was over around Boot Road that she grew up where grandfather truck farmed.

Carol: She met him at school?

Joan: No, my parents met at SunnyBrook Ballroom in Pottstown. They held dances there with the big bands of the '30s and '40s. My father always said that he saw her across the room and he said, 'I'm going to marry that girl.' The rest was history!

Carol: Aw, what a good story.

Allie: What was the SunnyBrook Ballroom?

Joan: I'm not exactly sure where it is really, around Pottstown I believe, and I think it's still in business. They supposedly had a wonderful dance floor and held dances there all the time, with famous bands such as Guy Lombardo, etc. A lot of people met there, from that generation. They would go to dance, meet, and date.

Allie: Cool! Now, what school did you go to when you lived here?

Joan: Downingtown High School. Actually, I went to Hopewell for first and second grade. Up by the church? I went to this school (Guthriesville) in this building for third, fourth, and fifth. It used to be sixth, but right at that year when I was ready to go into sixth, they changed it and I went to West Ward. We were in West Ward I guess until seventh. We were only there for a year. Then, we went to the old part of the high school. That was seventh, eighth, ninth through twelfth.

Carol: That's STEM now. STEM was the old junior/senior high school.

Allie: Yeah, I know that my mom went there too, but I think it was a middle school and then it closed. When I was in school, it was the middle school and the high school that are there now.

Joan: Well, this was the junior and senior. From seventh on until we graduated. Our class is still close.

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: We've lost a number of people this year, but we're still close. Ginny and I email back and forth—she was Ginny Law then, but she's Ginny Pierce now. I think her daughter was the Mayor of Downingtown for a while.

Carol: Their class meets every year.

Allie: What year did you graduate?

Joan: 1956. We were meeting, probably at least three times a year, at least, until Covid-19 put a stop to it.

Allie: That's so fun!

Joan: I think the last few times we met at the Thorndale Inn, just those who are able to make it. We have our big five-year reunions too.

Allie: Now, I know that you might have touched on this a little before we started recording, but I know Carol mentioned that when she lived in Lyndell she really didn't know much about the Bondsville Mill. Did you know anything about it, living a little closer?

Joan: Yes, our school bus went by it every day. There was a beautiful big pond. It wasn't as big as a lake, but it was right there from the bridge to the dam breast that was all water and beautiful. Every winter they would have a bonfire there, and people would ice skate all winter long. It used to be a lot

colder in the wintertime than it is now. It was just lovely. One of the things that really upsets me is that I've seen it just fill in over the years and trees grow up, so you'd never know looking at it now that there was ever a pond there.

Allie: It's difficult to see, you kind of have to look for it. I grew up right off of that road my entire life, and I felt like I never noticed it. When I got more involved, I was like 'Oh my gosh, it's beautiful!'

Joan: It was hard to see the mill, slowly over all those years disintegrating and falling down. I bought the house right across from the mill, that's up if you go in the one driveway and it branches off to the right going up. It's just a little house up there. I owned that for twenty-some years, and I always hoped somebody would do something about that mill and make the pond back into the way it was again. They could boat on that and everything. They'd fish and have ice skating in winter.

Allie: They used to fish on that?

Joan: Sure, I think so. Although, I never paid much attention. It was big enough. It covered quite a large area.

Carol: Jim was showing me pictures last night, and Rocky Stone is redoing the house.

Joan: Oh, really!

Allie: It's beautiful.

Carol: It's stunning.

Joan: It has so much potential. To just be sitting there falling down. As far as I know, they made textile kinds of things for the military.

Carol: Allie did her thesis on the Bondsville Mill, so she can tell you.

Allie: They really did all kinds of stuff. A lot for the war and then of course they have that memorial plaque out front, for the workers who were in that. They transitioned I guess over time, but there was primarily textile focus.

Joan: Well, as soon as I sold my house over there, they finally started to do something with it.

Laughter

Carol: They're doing a great job.

Joan: I thought, 'Darn, I would have liked to see that done while I owned it. Oh well.'

Laughter

Joan: It just got to be too much to have renters. I decided not to keep it any longer.

Carol: Isn't there a store?

Allie: There was a store. I'm trying to picture where your home would have been. But yes, there was a store, which is now apartments. It's a complex, but I guess it was closest to...

Joan: Oh, that was before the row houses?

Allie: Yeah, the big Victorian-looking building.

Joan: Okay. I lived just past the row houses. There's a driveway.

Allie: The rancher?

Joan: Yeah, and my house. There was a rancher right along the road, and you'd go up that and go to the right and that's where mine was.

Allie: I know exactly where you're talking about.

Joan: It's not the original, because the original burned down. The tenet at the time had a fire and burned it to the ground. We rebuilt it in 2000.

Carol: Then just past that was the schoolhouse, right?

Joan: Yes, that was the schoolhouse.

Allie: The house with the stone foundation?

Carol: Yeah, that was the school. I don't remember it being a schoolhouse when we were kids, do you?

Joan: No, no I don't.

Carol: But you could tell that it was a schoolhouse, at the time.

Joan: Yeah, it looked just like the way they used to build schools years ago. Like Hopewell, probably one or two rooms. Is this school (Guthriesville) open for people to see? Do they use it for something in particular?

Allie: You get in through a door over here, but I don't think it's open right now. Luke showed it to me before. I don't think that they open it to the public all of the time, but when the township is open I'm sure it's also open if you ask.

Joan: Does it still have seats and everything in there?

Allie: No, but I think I remember a chalkboard being up. It's neat to see. They kept as much of it as they could, it seems.

Joan: Did they? Well, Hannah Horner was the teacher downstairs. She had fifth and sixth grade. Mrs. Ferguson was upstairs, and she had third and fourth. I just wondered what, if anything, they might have kept of the way it had been.

Carol: Well, I was talking to Mrs. Mertz. Do you remember her? I think she was a little later.

Joan: No, that was later.

Carol: Bob Mertz is in Hickory House, so that was what we were talking about, maybe trying to see how many people we knew there.

Joan: You know who else you could talk to is Hayes Carr. The Carr's lived in Guthriesville, and Ruby's brother Hayes is into a lot of that sort of thing.

Carol: Is he?

Joan: Yes, he did a very extensive family history because I got a copy of it. Ruby's daughter was married to my son, Kevin, so I wanted a copy of it for my grandchildren.

Carol: Can you get his contact information?

Joan: Yes, I think I can.

Carol: Where does Larry live?

Joan: I don't know.

Carol: Really?

Joan: No idea. Wait, who?

Carol: Your brother.

Joan: Oh, Larry! I thought you said Harry.

Laughter

Joan: Larry lives on Barneston Road now. He is semi-retired and has a small six acres with his horses and so forth.

Carol: When Joan mentioned her brother, Larry, they lived in the house. They were tenants in the house across from the barn that they (Applecross) were trying to make into a restaurant.

Allie: Oh, Trego?

Joan: Is that what they are doing with that?

Carol: Yes.

Allie: It's interesting, because I think they just built a new clubhouse which has a restaurant. Right in front.

Carol: Really?

Allie: I'm pretty sure it has a restaurant inside.

Carol: That house across from it has a lot of historic value. Is that Risbon now?

Allie: I think. I thought it sat up on the hill? It's on the same side as the barn.

Carol: No, this is on the opposite side of the barn.

Allie: I saw that, but I don't know who is there.

Joan: It was the first house up that road, on the left. The road goes between the house and the barn.

Carol: They lived there.

Joan: Yes. Larry and his wife, Sheary, lived on one side, and there was another tenant farmer on the other side. Then they ended up having the whole house and raised their three girls there. Larry fox hunted for years and was keeper of the hounds as well. He is also a farrier and keeps a lot of local horses in shoes. Mr. Bachelor owned it, and then Mr. Kay bought it. Larry worked for Mr. Bachelor, and I think he started there even before Bachelor bought it.

Allie: Who is Bachelor?

Carol: That was their last name. As in a surname, rather than being a bachelor. They owned a property on Zynn Road and East Reeceville Road.

Joan: Overlook Farm is the name of the farm.

Carol: Probably West Brandywine?

Joan: I think that they built it first.

Carol: I think so too.

Joan: It was already there when Kay bought it. That's where Bachelor's lived.

Carol: The idea that we heard at the time was that they wanted to keep it all open space.

Joan: Right, and if you believe that, you know...

Carol: So much for that.

Laughter

Joan: Did you ever believe that? I never believed it.

Carol: No, I didn't think so either.

Joan: He bought every farm in the area. You know.

Carol: Right. Now, fox hunting. Did they actually do fox hunting there?

Joan: Oh my, yes.

Carol: I didn't know that. Did you know that?

Allie: I had no idea! I didn't know that they did that, but that would make sense. They're around!
Always around.

Joan: Larry could tell you all about that. I didn't fox hunt. As I said, he took care of the hounds.

Allie: Wow!

Joan: All of that. I don't know how many hounds he had. They kept the kennel with the hounds, when you go down Bollinger Road and come to the stop sign, that's East Reeceville Road there.

Allie: Not Zynn?

Carol: It might be.

Joan: Well, when you come down to the stop sign and you look straight across where they are building all those huge houses? Straight across, in the lower part, that's where they kept the hounds in kennels.

Allie: Is that East Reeceville?

Carol: Yeah, it might be.

Allie: I'm thinking, when you come down where they built the Applecross Barn.

Joan: Yeah, Bollinger Road.

Allie: Yes. You go down that road and stop and there's the new development across the road. The road that intersects there, I believe, is East Reeceville.

Joan: Yes, it is.

Allie: Yeah.

Carol: Yeah, that sounds right, Allie.

Allie: Zynn is the other one, that turns.

Joan: Yeah. See, we never went by the names much. We always said, 'You go down this road'.

Allie: Turn at the tree.

Laughter

Joan: Yeah.

Carol: Well, the grounds where her brother lived are where they kept the animals for the Wild West Show. Not when he was there, but years before.

Joan: Yes.

Allie: Really?

Joan: In fact, they have a picture of Wild Bill, sitting on the porch of that house.

Carol: I did an article. Well, we actually did it in a program. He would winter his animals there.

Allie: Wow!

Joan: He stayed there too.

Carol: One of the men that was a cowboy rider had the house on Hopewell Road. The farm, when you're just past Dilworth Road. On the left. Red barn?

Allie: That's beautiful.

Carol: That was his house. Buck Taylors.

Allie: So was it filmed here, locally? A show?

Carol: It was a show that would travel around.

Allie: So not a television show.

Carol: No, this was long before. This would have been late 1880s?

Joan: I would think so. Long before us. I'm old, but I'm not quite that old.

Laughter

Carol: Now, were you in Hopewell Church?

Joan: Oh my goodness, yes.

Carol: Right from the beginning, when you first moved here?

Joan: Pretty much. I think my parents sort of went back to Downingtown to the Baptist Church for a short while, but they decided to look for a church closer. They liked Hopewell and so joined there—I think that was about 1944. I still have the certificate when they joined some place. I joined the choir, and I was ten years old when I sang my first solo at Hopewell and joined church myself when I was twelve.

Carol: Joan has an amazing voice.

Joan: Thank you but well, not so much anymore.

Laughter

Carol: She sings for a lot of.

Joan: I was in both choirs, junior and senior choirs. All my life it seemed that the church was the center of all activities. We practically lived at the church. Everything we did was at the church. It was just a small church then. What they call the chapel now. I got married in that church. I had my first baby baptized there. Gosh.

Carol: Yeah.

Allie: What year were you married there?

Joan: 1957. I was nineteen, almost twenty.

Carol: And she's still a member there.

Joan: For a little while I wasn't, because we lived in Cape May for about fifteen years. I had joined the Cape May Methodist Church for those few years that I was there. I took part in their choir as well.

Carol: My previous boss is now minister there.

Joan: Of Cape May? Right there on Washington Street.

Carol: Oh, no you know what, it's Presbyterian.

Joan: Oh, is he?

Laughter

Joan: The one that I went to is the Methodist Church, right on Washington Street. Right in the middle of the town.

Allie: Did other families at Hopewell do the same thing? Was it a social center?

Joan: It was. As far as I know, there was a whole nucleus of people right in Guthriesville, and we all went there. There were this handful of girls, we were all about the same age. You know, Joan Piersol, Peggy McCausland, Millicent Krapf, Elsie Sinex, and myself. Everything revolved around youth fellowship and the choir. That's all there was.

Carol: Yeah, youth fellowship was very active.

Joan: We did a lot of things. We had hayrides and barbeque roasts. You know, they built these big bonfires and that kind of thing.

Allie: That's neat.

Carol: We were talking last night about the grange. Lyndell Grange? What do you remember about that?

Joan: I sang there a couple times.

Carol: Did you?

Joan: I did.

Carol: She did solos everywhere.

Joan: That's about all I remember about the grange.

Carol: That's what I said. That's what made me think of it. It was a social thing, somewhat.

Joan: That was on the other side. It was harder to get to. We didn't really go that far from home.

Carol: Well, yeah.

Joan: A lot of people, especially young people, you walked wherever you wanted to get to.

Everything was pretty few and far between.

Allie: Was anything going on, and I apologize, because I don't necessarily know the timeline of all of this. Where the Weaver Memorial is, and what used to be Mama Lena's in the center by the light.

Was anything going on there that you used to go to?

Joan: You mean right in the middle of Guthriesville?

Carol: Where Cropper's was.

Joan: Oh! There was a luncheonette. We hung out there. In fact, when we were going to school here (Guthriesville School), everyday around lunchtime we always made our pilgrimage down to the store in Guthriesville on the corner.

Carol: That's where Weaver's Memorial is now.

Joan: We'd go get our Tastykakes. They had Tastykakes then.

Allie: That's good stuff. They were probably even better then.

Joan: They were a lot better than they are now. You know those Butterscotch?

Allie: Yes, I do.

Joan: They don't make them the way they did then. They were like a sponge cake. Really good. I get those once in a while, but they are just cake. Always disappointed!

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: You know? They're just not the same.

Allie: Made differently.

Joan: Well, we went down there every day and had a couple cents to spend to get a little candy or something like that at lunchtime and then went back in time for afternoon classes. Oh! We had to go outside for water too. You didn't have running water.

Allie: Here (Guthriesville School)?

Joan: Yeah! Right outside. It was on the right side of the building if you're facing the road. There was a cement pad and then a pump.

Carol: So, there were outhouses?

Joan: Outhouses were behind, probably in the parking lot now. Yeah, same thing with Hopewell. You had a pump outside, and outhouses.

Allie: Now, this is my own curiosity. My experience in school was very different. What was your day like? Just thinking about how you were permitted to leave for lunch and then come back is mind blowing to me, because when I went it was so structured.

Joan: Oh yeah, it wasn't all that. We were turned out in the morning for recess for about fifteen minutes, and you just went out and played. The teacher wasn't even out there. She stayed inside, and you just went out and played and did whatever. Jumped rope. We jumped rope and did hopscotch. Then, in the middle of the afternoon, the same thing again. You had recess between lunchtime and when you went home. It was pretty nice. It was a rude awakening when we got to the bigger school, when there weren't recesses anymore. We really missed that, and like a half an hour lunch. We didn't get to go out and play anymore.

Allie: Not as ideal.

Laughter

Joan: No, it was disappointing. That's what it was like at the country school though. They actually did go out and ring a bell, to call you back in.

Allie: What would happen if someone got into trouble? Were there frequent troublemakers in class?

Joan: I don't remember there being a lot of trouble. Except for one time, and that was really devastating for me. It didn't have anything to do with me, but I was really upset about it. First grade, there was a little boy who must have been doing something bad or very annoying to the teacher and she actually took a rope and tied him in his seat. You would never see that nowadays.

Allie: Oh, no!

Joan: I thought it was very upsetting to me, even as a first grader, seeing one of the children tied up in their seats.

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: He sat in the back row on the left side. I can still see him. He was a little bit bigger than all of the others, so maybe there was a problem. I don't know.

Carol: Or the teacher was having a bad day!

Joan: Yeah, I don't know. She had a rope. That kind of kept the rest of us in line.

Allie: I sure wouldn't do anything.

Joan: Yeah. Other than that, I don't remember there being a problem. Everybody got along.

Allie: There was no nurses office, so was the teacher trained to handle that kind of thing?

Joan: I guess. I don't remember anybody needing a nurse. We were all pretty healthy. If you weren't feeling well, you didn't go. You stayed home. They did have a doctor come once a year and we each had a physical. Also, a visiting nurse would come once in a while to look at heads to see if anyone had lice. They are good questions, because I don't remember that there were any serious problems.

Allie: I just picture it so different, because I know that the disciplinarian—what they are able to do now vs then—you can't even look at a child the wrong way now. You know? You almost have to send them to the principal's office and then call the parents in and let them handle it. It's just very different.

Joan: Well, we got to stand in the corner. I mean, she would do something like that or sit on a stool.

Carol: We never would have argued with the teacher, which I think there's more of today. Back then, I think it was assumed that whatever the teacher did was right and so if the teacher said you were

misbehaving or not getting your work done, you could count on the parents supporting the teachers. You just wouldn't have even thought to argue.

Joan: I wouldn't have looked at anybody cross-eyed anyway because I was always really shy. Whatever she told us, that's what we did.

Carol: Do you remember the May Pole here (Guthriesville School)?

Joan: Yeah, I do remember. We learned to do that too. I do remember that, now that you mention it. Some things I've forgotten, but if somebody triggers my memory...

Carol: We always did a May Pole in the spring.

Allie: Really? Right outside?

Carol: Yeah. We'd pull ribbons, right outside the school.

Joan: I'd forgotten all about that!

Carol: It was kind of a big deal. The girls with the ribbons would go in and out, you know?

Joan: Yeah, a big deal. I don't remember how to do it now.

Allie: Again, my own curiosity, but what was your daily life at home like? What kind of things did your family like to do around the holidays or did Hopewell do something that you always looked forward to? Any particular celebrations?

Joan: One thing we always looked forward to—my father worked as a blacksmith at the Downingtown Manufacturing Company at that time and every summer they had a picnic. We were allowed to go up to a man who had a big roll of tickets and he'd just peel off a string of them and you'd go ride on anything you wanted until you couldn't even move again. We always had a picnic

and that was a great time. We'd go to the carnivals around the area in the summer too. There were always carnivals through the summer.

Allie: Where was that?

Joan: Downingtown Park.

Allie: Is that what is now Kerr Park?

Joan: Yes, Kerr Park. In fact, I loved to listen to the music and the bands. I would always stand in front of bandstand, listening to the bands play their music and everything like that. That was always a big deal. And, you know, Thanksgiving was just a big family time and Christmas was church and we always had a real tree.

Allie: Did you cut it down around here, or did you purchase it?

Joan: I don't really remember anything special about that. Well, we were told that Santa did the tree.

Allie: I have friends whose families did that.

Joan: Yes. We went to bed and when we got up there was a tree and it was decorated and everything had been done when we were sleeping, so we didn't have a tradition as far as putting it up. Santa did it.

Carol: Now, what about grocery stores? Was Cropper's there when you were?

Joan: No.

Carol: I didn't think so. That came much later.

Joan: No. My mother and father went to ACME in Downingtown, but they raised so much of their food.

Carol: Right, they didn't need to.

Joan: We didn't go often.

Carol: Maybe for flour or sugar, that kind of thing.

Joan: Since I was the oldest, I started to babysit when I was ten. You know, my brother was an infant in the basket, and they'd tell me, 'We'll be back shortly,' and off they went to the store. I was hovering over the basket going, 'Don't move, just stay where you are.' We learned to do those things when we were really young.

Carol: Just expected.

Joan: Yeah, I know even with my own children, I had to depend on my oldest little boy, Georgie. We lived in a house in West Cape May at the time. The store wasn't very far and he didn't have to cross the street, but I'd send him to the store. In fact, he even accuses me now and says, 'I was so scared that I was going to forget what you wanted, and I'd recite it the whole way there.'

Laughter

Joan: But my Valerie was a baby, and I didn't have a car. That's getting off track, but my mother didn't drive either. She never even learned to drive until she was thirty-four. And we only had one car, so she was kind of stuck too.

Carol: Right.

Joan: So, you had to learn to help. Wash days were Monday's. You pulled out the wringer and washer and loaded the two tubs—galvanized tubs with water—and you ran the clothes through the ringer. I learned to do that when I was little. It's not like it is now.

Allie: No!

Joan: Then you hung everything outside and it froze, and you brought it inside and draped it over the furniture to dry.

Laughter

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: It was harder for a woman to even think about working because they had so much more to do. You know, you had to raise your food and preserve it. I remember her slaving over that canner all summer long. In fact, I said I wasn't ever going to do that. But I did, somewhat, but not nearly as much as she did. I had helped her, so I learned how to do it.

Laughter

Allie: Did she have recipes that she used to make all the time?

Joan: Oh, yeah. I have her recipes.

Allie: Yeah? Was there anything that you really enjoyed?

Joan: I always liked it when we would have apple dumplings for dinner. That was it, she'd make all these apple dumplings.

Laughter

Carol: That would be dinner?

Joan: That would be dinner, yeah!

Carol: You wouldn't have any kind of vegetables?

Joan: A pitcher of milk. No, we didn't do it a lot. It was a special thing.

Carol: Yeah!

Joan: You had your apple dumplings and you poured milk over it. That was your dinner. Then, you had another one if you wanted.

Laughter

Allie: It's like dessert for dinner.

Carol: What a good idea!

Allie: I'm all for it.

Joan: That was good. I don't really know if there's anything else that I can think of yet that was special. It was kind of quiet around our house. We were all readers, we read a lot. We didn't have a television. You had television at your house (Carol), because I remember wanting to come over to your house so that I could see television.

Laughter

Joan: I was probably fifteen when we got television. So we read and did all kinds of things.

Allie: Was there a library around?

Joan: There was. My mother would take me to Downingtown. I think there's still a small library right on 30, in the middle of Downingtown?

Carol: They closed that and now it's over on Creek Road.

Joan: Oh, ok. This was an old house, and we used to go there maybe once a week or every couple of weeks and load up on books.

Allie: Yeah, it was a shame that they moved that one. It was a neat building.

Carol: Yeah, it was.

Joan: What, the old house?

Allie: Mhm.

Joan: Oh, so you got to be there?

Allie: Yeah! I grew up going to that one as well, and then just a few years ago for whatever reason, they decided to move it to an industrial sort of building.

Carol: I think it was at one time the school offices or something.

Allie: It might have been the DASD School District building. It moved to a different building, about two doors down, I think.

Carol: Now, do you remember when they started the fire company? I think that was in the '50s maybe?

Joan: I think that was when I was in Cape May. There were a lot of things that I missed.

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: Those years I was first married and moved to New Jersey. Then, when we moved back, we were actually in Lancaster County, so I don't always know what was happening. Sorry, I can't fill in that time period.

Carol: We were talking last night about the house that sat down on the corner here, of Bondsville and 322. Gussie and Cliff Irons'?

Joan: Oh, right on the other side of the garage that was there? The gas station?

Carol: Across the street. That was, at one time way back in the 1800s, some sort of tavern. Not tavern, an inn.

Joan: I don't know about that. Nope, sorry.

Laughter

Carol: Yeah, and then Cropper's. I mean, where Weaver's is. I guess there wasn't anything there then.

Joan: No. The Bryant's had the luncheonette and store right there.

Carol: Within the same building?

Joan: No, the luncheonette was separate. The grocery store was right on the corner.

Carol: Before it became Cropper's, it was Bryant's?

Joan: Yeah. Then the luncheonette was next to that, on the other side.

Carol: At one time a post office was in there.

Joan: She had it as long as I can remember. We used to go in there. Your sister (Elsie) would have two hotdogs with nothing on them.

Laughter

Carol: I believe it. I take her something to eat every week, and I make a mistake of some kind. Still picky.

Joan: I know, it's hard.

Laughter

Carol: So, I was trying to think of what else. On 322, there was a little store and gas station on the left, but I think that was earlier.

Joan: Yeah, but they did have gas there.

Carol: That would have been across from Wright's Insurance Agency.

Allie: Where those homes are? The little houses?

Carol: No. When you pass my house and you're going down 322. There's the garden center on the left.

Allie: That was Cropper's at one point, right?

Carol: Yeah, for a while it was. Then, you passed that and there's Wright's Insurance Agency on the right and on the left there's a house that sits fairly close to the road. I think it's a rental. If you look at it, you can sort of see where it might have been a store. I think it was basically a gas station. I don't know when that changed, but I remember seeing a picture of it. Downingtown Historical Society had a picture of it.

Allie: Interesting, I never knew that.

Carol: Then of course, the school. What's now Delaware County Community College was Downingtown Industrial School. What were your memories of that, Joan?

Joan: Just that it was very mysterious to me.

Laughter

Carol: I didn't want to put the words in your mouth!

Joan: Yeah, it was always like, what's back in there, you know?

Carol: They were all black. At the time, nobody was black in our school.

Joan: There were a few, but not very many.

Carol: In high school there were a few.

Joan: Even when I went to school, I think Flowers was in my class. The boy that they tied up in first grade was too. I don't know his name.

Carol: Oh! The boy that the teacher tied up was a black boy? Interesting.

Joan: Yeah, he was.

Allie: That changes my perception of it.

Carol: It does.

Joan: I'm sorry. I don't like to make a distinction.

Allie: No, we understand.

Joan: We didn't really see that. I never did. My parents never seemed to make a distinction. We were raised that way.

Allie: Right, but it's interesting that your teacher did that.

Joan: I know.

Carol: Especially since that was the one incident of physical abuse that you can remember.

Allie: That's the thing that stood out to you.

Joan: Yeah, actually it was, and it wasn't right.

Carol: I wonder where they lived. Do you know?

Joan: I don't, and I don't remember the name. I can't remember what his name was. I always felt bad for him being the only different person there.

Carol: Right.

Joan: In fact, I don't remember the name of my first grade teacher. Second grade was Marian Hershey and it was her first year of teaching. A few years later she married Peter Smith. So, the woman that was the teacher of first grade, I don't know if it was Bray or Gray or something like that. I'm not certain.

Carol: I had Bennich for first grade, but that would have been later.

Joan: No. I think Joyce had her. Well, Joyce was in your class, right?

Carol: No, Fred.

Joan: Fred! That's right...

Carol: Fred and I went to school together. I remember playing around the hills at your house and playing army and things.

Joan: Oh, yeah. One big thing was catching fireflies at night. Also we always went down Bollinger Road, Larry and I, to go fishing. We'd dig up worms and I'd make us each a stick for a rod and some string with a pin tied at the end for hook.

Allie: For fishing?

Joan: For fishing. We'd go off down Bollinger Road and turn right on Reeceville Road to the little bridge. We'd spend the whole day there. We soon got tired of not being able to catch any of the fish, you know, just playing in the water underneath. You could see the suckers in there. They were probably about fourteen inches long.

Allie: Wow.

Joan: They never bit, of course.

Laughter

Allie: You can only catch so much with a stick.

Joan: They were laughing at us, you know, trying to catch them.

Laughter

Allie: Yeah, wow.

Joan: We went down there a lot in the summertime, just down and back. Watters' parents lived at that time with—that would have been Bea's mother and father—they were living at that farm. Their name was Spears.

Carol: We're talking about the Watter's farm?

Joan: Yeah, the Watter's farm. But it was the Spears farm first. Mr. and Mrs. Spears continued to live there, and I guess Bea and Frank looked after them. He was such a wonderful older gentleman, and he'd go with us sometimes. He'd take us down Bollinger Road and take us for a walk, tell us what the different plants were, and we always sucked the nectar out of the honeysuckle. It was hot, because you didn't have air conditioning. It was hot.

Carol: Right. You didn't have fans that much, did you?

Joan: No, I don't remember having fans.

Carol: No. You got used to it.

Joan: Well, it cooled off at night because living in the country; you could open up your windows. You didn't ever lock your doors. The windows were open and the doors were unlocked. You'd let the air blow through.

Carol: Do you remember any crimes?

Joan: No, I remember hobos. The hobos would go through, and my mother would make them a sandwich and they'd sit on the top step on our front porch and eat their sandwich. I'd plop right down next to them and stare at them while they would eat. I was pretty young, you know?

Laughter

Joan: I was probably seven or eight, somewhere around there. You know, just trying to figure out how these men got around. My mother explained to me that they traveled around walking and getting rides on trains. I thought that was fascinating, that they were living free and easy like that.

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: That they could just stop and ask somebody for something to eat and then went on their way.

Carol: And your mother never hesitated to feed them?

Joan: No, no. She always made them a sandwich. She didn't come out though, she stayed in the house. I came out and sat with them.

Allie: To investigate.

Laughter

Joan: Yeah, just a kid's curiosity. I don't remember crime, no. There wasn't anybody around, we were pretty isolated.

Carol: There are some stories that I've always been curious about and never have found out anything about. One was down on Creek Road.

Joan: Murder Hollow?

Carol: Before, coming from Lyndell you'd get to Murder Hollow.

Allie: What's Murder Hollow?

Carol: You hadn't heard of that!?

Allie: Uh, no.

Laughter

Carol: The story is that Boo Boo Hoff...you know who that is?

Allie: I've heard the name.

Carol: He was a gangster, and he had a place at Milford Mills. The story was—I don't know how accurate though—was that he'd bring people out that he wanted to get rid of. There were some bodies found right there, in this area that was called Murder Hollow. So, if you were coming from Lyndell, down Creek Road, there's an intersection there and if you turn right, it comes to Hopewell Road. A little further down is Murder Hollow. There's little groupings of houses there.

Allie: Okay.

Carol: Ross Mowry, that's where he grew up. That may be something he knows about. That road, they had miniature horses, do you remember that?

Joan: No.

Carol: There was a woman on the corner there, and she had horses. I think they were miniature horses or something. When you went to the road on the right and close to the road, I guess it was a spring house but it looked kind of like a tower. I heard that when a guy went off to World War II, he came back and his girlfriend or fiancé had been seeing someone else, and he murdered her there. That's one story I always wondered about, but never found anything out. The other was one that Norman Piersol told me about—going up Lyndell towards Cornog on the other side of Creek Road—

there was a woman found in a well. The story, vaguely, is that there were some wealthy people and the son killed this woman and she was down in the well. I always wanted to find out more, because I've been curious.

Joan: You'd mentioned Mowry. Diane is a historian at church.

Carol: I asked her about talking with us, and her husband is going to.

Allie: Yes, we rescheduled with him but he's really interested.

Carol: That'll be great, because she did a lot of genealogy. When we did a tour of Hopewell Church for the historical commission, she arranged that and I talked to her then and I don't know if it was her side of the family or his, but they go back to blacksmiths. They spent a lot of generations here.

Joan: It's fun, I'm doing our genealogy. My father's family settled in Lancaster County in 1710. So they go way back too. They were all blacksmiths and gunsmiths as well. In fact, very similar to Diane's family line. My brother Larry, as I said earlier, does blacksmith work as well.

Carol: Isn't that funny?

Joan: Larry is just doing what they were doing without even knowing. They had a carriage house in Lancaster, and they made horse stuff. Saddles, bridles and built parts for carriages like wheels and carriages themselves. That building has since been torn down, but it's interesting. My grandfather, Martin Mylin, many generations back, is considered the inventor of the Pennsylvania long rifle.

Carol: Wow! Now, how about health care? Were there any doctors in this area?

Joan: The doctors came to the house. They came from Downingtown. I know that when I had the measles, the doctor came to the house so that you didn't go out and spread it around. That was

another thing I miss, doctors making house calls instead of you having to go out when you're not well. That's when I was pretty young, and then soon it got to where you'd have to go to them.

Carol: Coatesville was the only hospital?

Joan: No, Chester County and Coatesville. We're not really fond of Coatesville. But it was closer on the other side of Coatesville up the hill.

Carol: Where Harrison House is.

Joan: My father was really sick a few times and was there. He had surgery.

Allie: I know you said your one sibling was an infant when you were about ten. Were they born here? Were they born at that hospital?

Joan: No, my mother went to Chester County for all of her deliveries. That was the favored hospital. How Dad ended up in Coatesville was probably because of the doctor he had at the time. He suffered from bleeding ulcers, so I think that the doctor was supposed to be some sort of specialist.

Carol: I don't remember how it happened, but there was a man lynched from the Coatesville Hospital. A black man, taken out.

Joan: No.

Carol: Yeah, he was actually tied to the hospital bed and taken out.

Joan: Really?

Carol: Yeah, I've read that. It's factual.

Joan: It's gotten better since. The cure for the ulcers my father had was to take out your stomach.

Allie: Oh my gosh.

Joan: Yeah, Dad had his stomach removed in two surgeries. One, they took out three quarters of it. He got it again, the bleeding ulcers, so they took out the rest and pulled up the small bowel and made part of that into a stomach. The third time, he still got them again; they cut the vagus nerve which should never have been done. At that time they thought it was from your nerves and that sort of thing because they didn't know what did cause them. He would get that way every spring. It's a bacterial infection, but back then, they just didn't know.

Carol: They didn't know that. Poor guy, he must have suffered.

Joan: Well, the first time that he collapsed I was scared to death. I was still young. He got sick and there was dark blood and he went into shock. I think the Watter's had to help take him to the hospital at that time, because my mother didn't drive. She didn't learn to drive until after that, because she needed to know how to drive. She was about thirty-four, so I must have been about fourteen then.

Allie: You said he was a blacksmith. Was that something that was passed on to him?

Joan: My father, yeah. Also, my grandfather, who besides being the band director, he worked at the Downingtown Manufacturing Company too. They were blacksmiths that made tools and that sort of thing. They didn't really shoe horses like my brother does. Now my brother Larry, I do think it was passed down to him genetically, besides all the farm work that he has always done he's about seventy-six now and he can still throw bales around. Also, horseback riding, fox hunting, shoeing, so he's in good shape. He looks older than I do though.

Laughter

Allie: Get that on the record!

Joan: He always tells everybody, 'That's my older sister,' but he looks older.

Carol: He's weathered.

Joan: Yes, weathered, and I think I got him back!

Laughter

Carol: How about the theater in Downingtown, do you remember that?

Joan: Oh, yes! The movies, love going there whenever my BFF Elsie and I could get our parents to take us and drop us off on a Saturday afternoon—25 cents to get in, can you imagine?

Carol: I think that closed when I was pretty young.

Allie: Twenty-five cents? It's almost twenty-five dollars now.

Laughter

Allie: Do you remember any particular movies that you were excited about?

Joan: I don't remember the movies as much as I remember the serials in between. Like Tarzan and Superman. I like the *Three Musketeers* movie. I was into swashbuckling, and I found it romantic. The movies that were the best, the first ones that I ever saw when I was really little? *Song of the South*. You know, 'Zippity Do Da!' do you know that one? That was one of the first ones and in color too. *Gone with the Wind* of course was a favorite too, but I don't think that one ever got to Roosevelt Theater. I saw that with my mother and aunts at a fancy theater in Baltimore, Maryland. It was a really big deal.

Allie: Is that what it was called?

Joan: Roosevelt Theater. Yeah.

Carol: Do you know where that is, Allie?

Allie: No.

Carol: On 322, if you're going to Downingtown and you turn right past the big bank there and continue towards West Chester? Well, on the right side, it sits close to the road now.

Allie: Before the tunnel.

Carol: It's a dance studio now.

Allie: Yes, I actually took a class there before, yeah.

Carol: That was the theater.

Allie: Wow! I've heard that it's haunted.

Joan: There was also the Capital Baker's Kiddie Show in Coatesville. Elsie and I sang. It was live on the radio, a talent show. Elsie and I came in second. Do you remember that, Carol?

Carol: Yes! I remember you talking about it.

Joan: We sang a song called "I Said My Pajamas and Put On My Prayers." It's a goofy song all the way through. Doris Day recorded it and we sang that for the Capital Baker's Kiddie Show on WCOJ. I think we were maybe twelve years old, somewhere in there. I think we came in second. Some kid with a guitar, of course, won first. We did pretty well. We also forgot the words right in the middle of the song and looked at each other and started laughing. We got through it though. You can look it up online and hear Doris Day sing it.

Carol: In Coatesville?

Joan: Yeah.

Carol: Now see, I do remember the one in Coatesville. I think it was open when I was a kid. The one in Downingtown had closed.

Joan: That was fun to do. We did all kinds of stuff. We made a record on the boardwalk one time too. I don't know what happened to it. One of those places on the boardwalk where you go into a booth and make a record.

Carol: Yeah.

Joan: It was lost.

Carol: American Bandstand. Didn't you go to American Bandstand?

Joan: I never went. I don't know if Elsie ever did, you'd have to ask her. I never went. I was pretty shy, and I've outgrown it somewhat.

Laughter

Carol: Joan also worked in Pepperidge Farm. No, the box company.

Joan: I worked at Dopaco on Boot Road a folding carton plant. It was Sonco until Dopaco separated from Sonco.

Carol: Everything's torn down now.

Joan: I know, I saw that! I was reading about it the other day, or maybe the historical society had something with pictures. I can't believe they tore it down. It moved though, right after I stopped working there. They moved from Boot Road to another site. It was an interesting job.

Carol: You were a supervisor, right?

Joan: Yes, quality control supervisor. It was interesting. Jim Smyth was one of the owners. I worked there for about seven years. We were making french fry boxes for McDonalds, clamshell boxes for Burger King and cartons for other fast food places.

Allie: Oh! I didn't know that was there.

Carol: Oh! Temperance Hall, my own curiosity. When you pass my house going towards Downingtown, the house that was always pink? It sits close to the road and near the entrance of the Medicine Shoppe. That was something, and I thought it was Temperance Hall. Does that mean something to you?

Joan: No, not at all. People like Joan and Peggy might. They lived right there.

Carol: Right. The one would have been where the Wright Agency is now, Allie. It was the Piersol's. Then further up, the big farm on the right just before the light, that was the McCausland farm.

Joan: That was the McCausland farm, but Peggy didn't live there.

Carol: She lived on Corner Ketch.

Joan: Yeah, that road between Corner Ketch and 322.

Carol: Do you remember there being a little store on Corner Ketch?

Joan: Vaguely, but it would have been just from riding on the bus.

Carol: I don't remember it, but I've vaguely heard about it. I think maybe a candy store or something.

Joan: I don't know. Like I said, we didn't wander too far.

Carol: Right. That would have been on the way to Hopewell Church, so I was thinking you might know.

Joan: I'm just thinking. Is it where they decorate the house?

Carol: No.

Allie: Right by there though.

Carol: I think the other corner, but I don't know.

Joan: I think Ross lived right in there too. I can't help you there.

Allie: Those are things I didn't hear about before.

Joan: Basically, when we moved in, there were no other houses but Watters Farm. They were our only neighbors. Now, everywhere you go, there are houses.

Carol: Yeah, that's for sure.

Joan: Many changes still going on in East Brandywine Township since I put down a few of my recollections of the last 80+ years and I'm sure as time goes along there will more and more. I just want to thank Allie and Carol for asking me to participate in this most interesting and worthwhile project. I'm sure this project will be a wonderful addition to the history of East Brandywine Township. I so appreciate all of your hard work on this wonderful project.