

East Brandywine Township Oral History Project

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Interviewee: Steve Sarmiento

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Steve: I'm Steve Sarmiento.

Allie: How long have you been in East Brandywine Township?

Steve: 1964. I was four years old when we moved here.

Allie: So you went to school here?

Steve: Brandywine Wallace. It was where it is today.

Allie: After that?

Steve: Lionville. Then, senior high at Downingtown. I guess it's West now. Back then, it was only the one.

Allie: But your middle school was Lionville?

Steve: It was Lionville Junior High. I was the last class to go through Brandywine Wallace through sixth grade. They went all the way to sixth, but the next year they started shipping sixth graders to East Ward. I was the last to do that. My sister was two years behind me, and she had to go to East Ward.

Allie: It's interesting to hear the transitions of the school systems.

Steve: I work in construction. I guess it was ten years ago they did work on the school (Brandywine Wallace), and I was up there. I was sitting in the cafeteria eating lunch, and it was funny how 40

years ago I had done the same thing. The cafeteria was the same as it used to be. Some of the school is still the same, but some of it has the addition. That was a fun school.

Allie: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Steve: As a matter of fact—you know how I do all the Christmas lights? This year I was setting something up and I was in my garage. I heard somebody say my name and start talking to me and there's this lady—maybe in her seventies—and here it was Mrs. Wilson who I had in second grade. She lives maybe four or five houses down the road from where I do. We do the Facebook thing, where you can chat with friends. I haven't seen her since though.

Allie: That's funny that she remembered you too!

Steve: A lot of the teachers have passed. Mrs. Mertz—I know that she passed. That's the couple I remember. I remember Mrs. Ayres. And the principal. My mom about killed that man once.

Allie: Why?

Steve: We were up there in third or fourth grade. We were having chicken fights and I was on somebody's back. We got knocked down, and my arm hurt. There was only a nurse two days a week. He's in there telling me I was alright. Went home, and here it was broken. Broke my arm there. I had to sit the rest of the day with that. That was stupid then though, to only have a nurse so many days a week.

Allie: You wouldn't be allowed to have a chicken fight in school.

Steve: I don't think we were supposed to then either. It was definitely more relaxed.

Laughter

Allie: How about high school teachers?

Steve: Not really. When I was in high school, I just wanted to get out. I had friends down here that lived on Marshall Road and they were farmers. I always wanted to be a farmer, and I used to spend more time there than at home.

Carol: Which farm was that?

Steve: Trego Farm. If you go down Marshall Road, where the big bend is, before Cornog—the farm that sits on the right. I basically grew up there. The farm and the house are still there, but everything else is other houses now. Now, I wish I would have cared more in school. When I was a senior, I just went for two classes a day.

Allie: How did that happen?

Steve: There was a program where if you had a job, it would count as the program.

Allie: Like a Vo-Tech?

Steve: It was called Pro or something.

Cynette: Yeah, it was Pro.

Steve: You had to take Gym, an English course and a history course. That was it. After that, you'd sign a book and be out of there by 10:30AM or something like that.

Carol: Was that just a senior year thing?

Steve: I happened to be living in Quarryville at the time, so I was getting up with the cows and driving to school every morning. Slept through two classes and then would drive home.

Laughter

Carol: What happened that you didn't become a farmer?

Steve: I found out that you couldn't make money working for somebody else. A friend of mine—a construction block layer—asked if I wanted to help out one summer. That was 1978, and I'm still doing it 40 years later.

Allie: Wow.

Carol: So, of course we want to know the story of the Christmas house! How did that get started?

Steve: When we first moved there, my dad would put the big old lights out on a tree in the yard. My dad hated it, but for my mom he did it. We'd do that with just a few lights. In '73 there was an energy crisis and they said we had to conserve electric? My dad said that was it. He passed away in '96, and for some reason I had this idea to put up a few icicles and two or three reindeer. That was the beginning of it.

Carol: So you really started it.

Steve: I don't know why I did it. I kind of liked the lights and used to drive around to look at the lights myself. My mom lived there with me until she passed in '09. She added to it anytime she saw something on sale.

Laughter

Allie: It grew and grew and grew.

Steve: Everybody knows it now. My mom actually went to Germany once and she got sick and was flying home first class. She saw someone who had a coat from West Chester on and started talking to the guy. When she told him she lived in Guthriesville, he brought up "the house with all the lights." Here she is, flying back from Germany, and somebody knew the house. When I see people now, I'll say Corner Ketch, but they know the road by the lights. The signs that said "Corner Ketch" are gone. You used to be able to see it on a map.

Carol: Yeah!

Steve: That used to be pretty neat. You could look at a little spot and there was a crossroad.

Carol: What was at Corner Ketch when you were growing up? Was the general store there?

Steve: No, they were gone by then. The house used to be one, and then across from me—Collins used to live there. I think that was an old store too.

Carol: It has the long front.

Steve: There was always a rumor that there was a tunnel going across the road from Clement's old house to Collin's house.

Allie: I've never heard that.

Carol: That sounds vaguely familiar. Was that considered to be part of the Underground Railroad?

Steve: That's what I was always told. I was in Clement's house so many times helping him with his heater and stuff, and I've never seen nothing. His house was built in 1812.

Carol: Yeah, it's got the siding on it so you can't really tell.

Steve: The basement's old.

Carol: That would be north.

Steve: The same side that I'm on.

Allie: Recently for sale and is a rental?

Carol: Yes.

Steve: It has a big guardrail right in front. You know where I live, so it's the next one over by the stop sign.

Carol: When was your house built?

Steve: If you look at the deed, it says 1952. I don't know if you remember Mrs. Harple?

Carol: Yes, she lived across the street.

Steve: They built their house in '53, and she says that house (his) was there long before that one (theirs). Somewhere I was looking through old records online, and it said 1921. Which, I'd believe that more because of some of the way things are built in there. The porch seems to be redone and all that stuff. The deed says 1952, but I don't know if I believe it.

Carol: It's got unusual architecture.

Steve: If you go inside, it's got ceiling beams and all that stuff. My aunt was Nancy Echeas. She lived in the Reed House. I guess they just sold that last year.

Carol: Thomas Buchanan Reed house. Oh, did they? I've been wondering.

Steve: She's in a nursing home. I was surprised when I heard that they sold the house. The lady that bought the place is a jogger, and around Christmas she stopped and we started talking, and she told me they bought it, and I told her that it was my aunt's.

Carol: I was concerned, because it should be on the historic register, but it isn't. I think we should get it on there.

Steve: I have the Christmas ornament of it.

Carol: Those wooden ones?

Steve: Yeah, one of them was their house. My aunt lived out here and my dad. We used to live in Downton on Grant Avenue, and they used to always come out here. You know the Italian

families, and everybody drinks. They used to work on that house, and I guess that's how they ended up coming out here.

Allie: So, when you moved here, it was from Downingtown. Were you born in Chester County?

Steve: Yeah, in West Chester.

Allie: You said you were four when you moved?

Steve: Three or four.

Allie: What did your dad do?

Steve: He worked at Gindy's Trailers up in Downingtown.

Carol: Was that in Eagle?

Steve: They used to have a plant right over the bridge, going to Pepperidge. When you turn left there, it used to be Gindy's. He used to work there. One day he came home, and he told us we were going to go see a good fire. Here, the place had burnt down. We sat up in the field and watched it.

Allie: The plant burnt down?

Steve: Yeah. That's when he ended up going to Eagle.

Allie: That's why he moved out here, then?

Steve: No, we were already here by then. In Downingtown, he'd walk home. That used to be the big deal, that we could ride our bikes down the block. We were at the far end of the block. All my cousins and extended family basically lived there. I think there were four or five cousins who lived down there in Downingtown. We were the ones to come out here.

Allie: Do you still have family in the area?

Steve: Nah, not really. They moved or passed away.

Carol: What about your sister?

Steve: She passed. She passed in 2012.

Carol: What was her name?

Steve: Sharon.

Carol: I don't think I knew her.

Steve: She was friends with the Bonds. They used to live in the other house, across from the Popjoy property. She used to babysit them. She was good friends with them. I see them at the flea market—Jake's. I go up there and see her and her son. They live down here across from the school somewhere.

Cynette: Steve, are the other Sarmiento's cousins?

Steve: I have a lot of cousins. There are a lot who are second and third cousins. I don't know who they all are. I only see them if I go to a funeral. It used to be that I'd ask my mom who they were.

Allie: I know the name. It's big in the area.

Carol: You said that you were Italian—who immigrated?

Steve: My grandparents came over to Ellis Island. My grandfather was pure Italian, and my grandmother was pure Polish. When they were redoing Ellis Island, you could pay to put the names on the wall. When I went up there one day in the early 2000s, we found the names on the wall. They were first generation.

Allie: You guys probably have some great food holidays. Italian and Polish? Oh, man.

Laughter

Carol: What was your mother's name?

Steve: My mother was a Shank, and she lived out of West Chester. I don't really know the history of their family.

Carol: But your grandmother was the Polish immigrant?

Steve: Yeah. And my grandfather was all Italian. My aunt even got the name of the boat they came over on and everything. I have that stuff at home somewhere. It's neat to go up there (Ellis Island) and see your family name on the wall.

Carol: I wonder what brought them to Downingtown.

Steve: You know, I've always wondered that too. There's nobody left to ask. My Aunt Nancy would be the one to ask, I guess.

Carol: Downingtown Historical Society did a neat program on the immigration about Downingtown. I asked them about presenting it for us here, but the man who did it said that he's having some things going on, so maybe later.

Steve: I know they lived in Vermont or New Hampshire for a few years. I don't know what brought them here. Back then, you didn't really care as a kid. Now, I understand genealogy more and wish I'd done more with that.

Carol: I'm always curious what caused people to move. It couldn't have been an easy thing to do at the time.

Steve: I'm never going to move. I'm never leaving that house.

Allie: Was that your family home?

Steve: I basically stuck around since my parents weren't in the best of health. My father passed in '96, and then my mom passed in '09.

Allie: You have a lot of memories in that house. That's great. I know that your dad was working at the trailer company—was your mom at home?

Steve: No, she was home for years but then got a job at the Exton Mall. She ran the McDonald's down there. We only had the one car, so she always had to be home to pick him up, and then they put in Marsh Creek and that really upset everybody. You could go right through Milford to go to Eagle.

Carol: Exactly. Now you have to go way around.

Allie: I didn't know a difference. Who knew there was a shortcut?

Laughter

Steve: You'd be in Eagle in five or six minutes. Now, it's almost fifteen.

Cynette: Some roads are only one way.

Steve: I still can't believe they did that. I sometimes go to watch the boats. I barely remember when they did that. What was it, '72?

Cynette: I was young too. I was born in '66.

Steve: I was old enough to stay home while my mom went to get my dad, and I'd watch my sister. That was a big deal then, because I didn't want to have to hop in the car to drive there.

Cynette: It took a while to fill it, didn't it?

Steve: I used to go to that Trego Farm all the time and their grandfather who owned the barn that's right down there—if you go to the end of Milford Road the house is still back there. The water goes

right up to it. I remember when they sold the farm and the auction. We used to drive around there and that's when they fixed Little Conestoga and all that.

Allie: Did you know the Trego's from school?

Steve: I met them at Brandywine Wallace. Second or third grade. I was friends with the one and always wanted to go to their farm. When you're younger, it was always more fun to go somewhere else. I'd go Friday night and get picked up on Sunday. Most nights I'd ride my bike over there. When they got their license, they'd come pick me up. I was a good worker. It's what I wanted to do in life, to be a farmer. Then I found out you can't make any money at it.

Allie: Did you have a garden at home?

Steve: Yeah, we used to at home. It got to be too much for my parents to do and then you were able to go down to the stores and buy the same stuff—just as easy.

Carol: Just as cheap sometimes too.

Steve: Doesn't taste the same anymore, but back then it did.

Allie: Did you shop at Cropper's? Was that your closest grocery store? Where was it?

Steve: Where the monument place is now.

Allie: Weaver Memorial.

Steve: I remember that well. I'm so glad it's back.

Cynette: In the store, a picture of the old store is up on the wall of Crop's.

Steve: In the old store, there were two counters and the one had candy right behind it. They used to have a little bump out, which I guess was a freezer. The meat was in the back. I can still remember that store.

Cynette: If you're at Crop's—at the registers—look up at the wall. It's a picture of the old Cropper's.

Steve: People move in who weren't here when they were younger, and they think the original Cropper's was when it was at the Village Hardware.

Carol: Yeah, that was the second spot.

Allie: I never had seen the one at Weaver's Memorial, but I remember the one at Village Hardware—growing up it was there. Within a couple of years though, it was at its location now.

Steve: Then they built one in Downingtown. My mom used to be friends with them, and she was one to tell people what she thought. She didn't think it was a good idea. Maybe a year later, that Wegman's came in.

Cynette: It only lasted a couple of years there.

Allie: Was that where Best Buy is? That area?

Steve: Yeah.

Carol: That wasn't very long ago.

Allie: It wasn't. That was short-lived.

Cynette: Then Bob Cropper passed away. That was sad.

Steve: Yeah. When I was farming, I used to help farm his property. He lived right down Little Washington. That's where the tree farm is, and he lived right before that tree farm. It changes names at the top of that hill. It goes into Marshall.

Cynette: My grandfather used to live around the corner from Bob, on Highspire Road.

Carol: Do you remember the luncheonette?

Steve: And the barber shop. That was the guy who lived up by the school (Brandywine Wallace).

Allie: Did he at one time run a barber shop out of his house? I think they just had that house up for sale recently, within the last year or two.

Steve: It was.

Allie: When I was starting to look at houses, that popped up. I remembered it being that barber shop.

Steve: My brother-in-law used to get his hair cut with that guy. I forget his name.

Cynette: Was it Cozzone?

Steve: No, that was the gas station. I remember that gas station well.

Allie: I wasn't here for any of this, but based off of everybody's stories, I'm starting to visualize where it all was!

Steve: When did you move here?

Allie: I was born in '92.

Laughter

Carol: This gas station was where the pharmacy is (Hopewell Pharmacy).

Cynette: Right on the corner.

Steve: That sat there forever, just an abandoned building.

Allie: The old Sunoco?

Carol: No, the other corner, where the pharmacy is.

Allie: I thought that was a tire shop, no? Didn't he move up to Glenmoore or Honey Brook?

Steve: The tire shop was in the old gas station's building.

Carol: Before that it was Krapf's.

Steve: I don't remember Krapf's.

Carol: Krapf started his buses from there.

Steve: My first paying job was with Krapf wiping buses. When you were 14 you were allowed to work, and a bunch of friends of mine and I went and got jobs down there. One guy's brother worked there. It used to be half a dozen of us from around Corner Ketch that would work there. One mother would pick you all up and you'd go down to the bus yard and wipe those buses. That's all you did—get a rag and wipe them off. You'd go up on Saturday and there would be maybe a dozen people and two different crews. It'd be like a football game where there'd be two to start and then each guy picked this one and this guy picked that one. One route used to go to Coatesville, and one used to go to West Chester. I think we made something like \$2.05 an hour. You worked maybe ten to twelve hours a weekend. A check would be on the door. That was pretty neat when you're 14 years old.

Allie: Yeah, you were excited.

Steve: I don't know if you knew George Krapf. If he didn't like you, you knew it.

Carol: Oh, yeah.

Steve: I guess Dale and Dallas are still around, right?

Cynette: Retired now. I just found that out. But their sons are now doing it.

Steve: I met somebody when I was doing work over at Pickering Valley School, and one guy over there started talking to me about the Christmas lights. I think he said he's married to one of the family now, and he used to be big into buses.

Cynette: Both the sisters have died, I think.

Carol: Millicent was the oldest, and she was a teacher at Downingtown.

Steve: I used to be able to walk up to Brandywine Wallace, by the Welsh driveway—where Mr. Welsh used to live. You could go on this grass strip and come out on Keller Way. You'd walk through the driveway and be right there at the school. That was a big deal when you were little, that you could walk to school if you wanted and didn't feel like waiting for the bus.

Allie: Did you do that?

Steve: I used to do that a lot. I'd just walk up the little hill and cut through the driveway.

Cynette: We all used to walk to Brandywine Wallace. You guys are lazy now.

Laughter

Carol: The Pancoast farm was there for some years. They raised horses.

Steve: I don't remember. I just remember the farm.

Cynette: Now, where you lived, do you remember this big field back here and it's a big development now? Laird owned that.

Steve: Oh, yeah. I knew him from the farm. He used to haul animals.

Cynette: I used to have horses on his farm.

Steve: When he'd have an animal to go to auction, he'd come to pick it up.

Cynette: He had other animals, but he let me keep my horse there. My horse used to go in that whole field.

Steve: When we first moved here if you heard a car go by after five o' clock you wondered what was going on. We used to play right in the road. There was one stop sign at Corner Ketch. When they built the four-way, we knew it was going to be trouble.

Cynette: I used to park on 322.

Carol: Fry's lived...?

Steve: Was that who lived in the house behind Collin's? Shank used to live across from people who sold their house that used to do church work. They used to live there and we'd go walk. You could walk and ride bikes and not see cars. Now, you wouldn't believe it.

Carol: Who had the luncheonette?

Steve: I don't know. I was really young, but I remember eating there. And the barber shop next to it. And of course, Mama Lena's—I can't believe they are putting that back.

Allie: Are they calling it the same thing?

Steve: Mama Mia's now.

Allie: Same family?

Steve: No. The issue was that you could never get out of there.

Allie: I don't know how you'll get out of there now.

Cynette: Can you park out back?

Steve: You can park, but there's no road to get out.

Allie: They should put a road coming out towards the firehouse.

Steve: They couldn't get one across the creek. That's why Wawa gave up.

Allie: Oh, that's right.

Cynette: That would be perfect to just have something going behind the memorial place (Weaver Memorial).

Steve: I know when we used to get stuff from Mama Lena's, we'd turn right and go all the way up 322 to Corner Ketch and go home that way. That was the same thing with the Landhope.

Cynette: These guys are going to deliver!

Steve: I'm no big fan of pizza.

Carol: I'm not either.

Steve: I used to get stuff from Mama Lena's though. I read in the paper that they're putting that in again.

Carol: I wouldn't have wanted to see those buildings go.

Steve: I was surprised they got rid of the one on the corner. The big white one.

Carol: That was the Irons'.

Steve: That was like, bang, bang, and done. They messed up—Applecross—the old barn. It was supposed to be saved and the equipment got too close to it. It was like Clements' house when that was condemned and they tore that down.

Carol: Really?

Steve: Clements moved here in the '70s.

Carol: I can't remember who lived there before.

Steve: They moved down there to Creek Road. I can't remember their name.

Carol: I guess you were part of St. Joe's Parish?

Steve: No. My dad was the only one who didn't go Catholic. That's one of the jokes about why we're out of Downingtown.

Laughter

Steve: Everybody else in the family is Catholic, just not me. I had to join Hopewell Church. That's one of the things my mom always said—that you had to join a church. I think I went once after I joined.

Laughter

Cynette: I never saw you there as a youth kid.

Laughter

Steve: Well, I did all those things you had to do. What do they call the class?

Cynette: Confirmation class.

Steve: I remember doing that. My mom always told me I had to. I used to do the Sunday School out there with the woman who used to play the piano.

Carol: Reba Thompson.

Steve: No, wasn't it the Popjoy girl, Ruth? That was the big thing. I'm not very religious, but growing up, that was something I had to do. I had to do the Boy Scouts until a certain age. But, I was on the farm and on a Sunday that's where I'd have rather been. It was more fun over there.

Carol: Do you remember the Wortley fire?

Steve: The house before the church? Yes.

Carol: What do you remember about it?

Steve: We had to be off school, or it was a weekend. I forget. I remember hearing it was on fire, and we all went up there. For some reason, I still think I saw a dog laying at the door. I remember everyone telling us to get out of the way. We were young kids then.

Carol: It was always kind of a mystery.

Steve: He wasn't there. It was the whole family that passed.

Allie: The whole family perished in the fire? During the day?

Carol: Yeah.

Cynette: Do you remember how old you were? I remember going to school with a Wortley.

Steve: I don't remember the name, but I remember being up there and seeing the fireman. You know how you think you see something, but as you get older, you're not sure? I still think I see them carrying bags with the bodies of the people out.

Carol: You probably did. It was the wife, mother-in-law, and kids.

Steve: I heard when they built the house, they built it with no walls. It was one of the things that I remember about how it spread.

Cynette: They're all buried up at Hopewell, in a row.

Allie: How weren't they able to get out? You figure during the day, if you're not sleeping...

Carol: The whole thing was very strange.

Cynette: They were all found at the front door. With a dog too.

Steve: That's what I remember. A dog.

Carol: I seem to remember that too, Steve.

Steve: I guess when the house on the corner burnt, Popjoy's, I remember that too. I remember walking across Clements' old yard and a fireman telling me to stop. I guess an electric line had fallen and I'd almost stepped in it.

Cynette: Do you remember Lyndell Store? My grandpop's?

Steve: That used to be the big thing. Everybody would grab their bikes and we used to ride. That was one of the main stops. We used to get kicked out and sit on the bridge and ride more. We'd ride to the candy store in Thorndale. I think it's a medical office now, but there used to be a store now.

Allie: Where was that?

Steve: I think an eye doctor's now. Between the Exxon and the place where the canopy got blown over the other night.

Allie: Oh, that little building.

Steve: It used to be a little store and we used to stop for candy.

Allie: You used to ride your bikes all the way down there?

Steve: Oh, yeah. There wasn't traffic.

Cynette: We used to stop there on the way to high school.

Allie: It's a lot of hills.

Steve: We were kids! There was probably half a dozen of us who'd ride bikes. When they built the new development across from the church.

Cynette: Did you skateboard down the hill to Downingtown? Danny said they'd skateboard down the hill from that church and it would take you to Downingtown if you got enough speed. Bike too, it'd work the same way.

Carol: Getting back was the problem.

Steve: I never could skateboard. I stuck to biking. You could walk anywhere. In a big snowstorm, we got snowed in for a few days in the '60s.

Carol: Oh, yes.

Steve: I walked with my mom in a toboggan to Cropper's to get food.

Carol: People were walking down Creek Road, and it was nothing but a little pathway.

Steve: I think it was '66 if I'm not mistaken.

Carol: I think earlier than that. How about Bondsville Mill?

Steve: That used to be the big ice-skating thing. Used to have a little island in the middle and somebody would have a fire there. It used to be a beautiful place to skate. That's where I always used to skate, before they built the duck ponds and all that. Back then, it got cold enough to freeze.

Allie: Do you remember anyone bathing there?

Steve: No.

Allie: We've heard something about that, so I was curious.

Steve: I'm sure it happened. I remember that across the road from me—at Collin's—whenever the well didn't work you had to go out there and use the old hand pump. It doesn't work anymore, but it's still out there. I was telling my neighbors, and they can't believe that the house was built in 1820. A lot of work being done.

Carol: I saw Harple's adding on.

Steve: She gave that to her grandson.

Allie: Where's that?

Steve: The next house, on the opposite side of the hill. Almost down where I live.

Carol: It was on the right. It was small, but they kept adding to it.

Cynette: Is it Debbie?

Steve: Her son. I think he gutted it. I remember Mr. Harple could fix bikes. He'd fix them and sell them. You needed anything fixed, you just go to see Mr. Harple. When he died, I'd go up there once a week just to talk to her. She moved in with her daughter, I think. She lives in Downingtown now. I hope she's still in good health.

Carol: You were talking about Grant Avenue, and my youngest daughter lives on Grant.

Steve: We lived at the far end. The second house, I think it's a double. A friend of my mom's daughter bought the house. My mom used to be in senior group.

Carol: Sorry, veering off-topic.

Allie: Don't be sorry, I'm absorbing!

Steve: How old are you?

Allie: I'm 26.

Cynette: I can't believe that you're younger than my kids. Now I'm really upset.

Laughter

Allie: You have one that's younger than me!

Steve: It's good to see younger people doing this stuff.

Allie: Some of us still care!

Laughter

Carol: Yes, and I'm glad. My one granddaughter is very interested in anything about it. We talk about it a lot. Someone gave me one of those wooden houses. She likes those.

Steve: I have the collection. I think from the flower shop. How many are there?

Cynette: I think five or six. Hopewell Church.

Steve: East Brandywine Baptist Church.

Cynette: Guthriesville School.

Steve: My aunt's house (Thomas Buchanan Reed).

Cynette: The luncheonette.

Allie: Who made them?

Carol: It was a collection an artist did. A series.

Steve: In the '90s, I think.

Carol: A company was doing different villages and things.

Cynette: I think Jane sells them (Jane's Flower Farm).

Steve: She used to sell the crocks for Hopewell, Corner Ketch and Guthriesville. I've got all of those.

Carol: Oh, really? I think we have the Guthriesville one.

Steve: I have two Corner Ketch's, and the girl across the road saw it and said she loved it, so I told her to take it. I had two of them. Years ago, it was on a map. And the history of it.

Allie: What's the history of it?

Steve: Well, stores were there. I guess it was important years ago. It had two general stores there, so it must mean something.

Allie: I don't think I knew that. This is one of the interesting things—and I don't know if you would agree or not—we've been talking about how even though I'm a "recent" addition to the township, I grew up just at the cusp of Coatesville, at the end of North Bailey Road. I didn't know much about Lyndell. I knew East Brandywine Park and that we drove through Lyndell to go to Marsh Creek, but that was about it. It was little landmarks. I went to Hopewell for preschool, but that was the extent of my history in that area there.

Steve: The big houses that used to sit on Creek Road, that are gone now?

Carol: Milford Mills?

Steve: No, on Creek Road. Weren't there mansions? Between Lyndell and Cornog? Wasn't the one where somebody got murdered?

Carol: Oh, the woman in the well?

Steve: Threw her head down the well?

Allie: Just her head?! That's what you heard?

Laughter

Steve: That's the story I always heard. We went down there to look for the house. Down by Frank's Folly, I drove my car into a guardrail once on my way to a fire call. I used to run with Glenmoore Fire Company. Went right under it, on a sheet of ice.

Carol: How about Murder Hollow?

Steve: I only remember hearing about it.

Carol: On 282.

Steve: Dead Man's Curve?

Carol: Before that.

Cynette: There's a couple of houses along the strip there.

Steve: The gangster lived there, right?

Cynette: Well, he lived in Milford Mills in a big mansion. Boo Boo Hoff?

Allie: What did you call him? The Gasher?

Steve: No, gangster!

Allie: Oh, god. I thought, "*The Gasher! It sounds terrifying.*"

Laughter

Steve: We rode bikes there before they tore it down. I can barely remember what it looked like—the mansion.

Cynette: They say the mansion is still there. It was too big to tear down.

Allie: They just filled it in? I've heard that there's a church, or a steeple. If you're over a certain area, you can still see it?

Steve: No, they leveled all that.

Carol: There's no church.

Steve: The only thing I know that's still there is if you go down Little Conestoga Road, there's the old roadbed.

Cynette: There's some marble steps on the one side.

Carol: I was disappointed to hear that they tore down the old youth hostel. If you're heading towards Marsh Creek, it sat close to that area. My parents were friends with the people who lived there. I always thought it was a great home. They had a swimming pool and so forth. After they did Marsh Creek, it became a youth hostel. I found out not too long ago that they completely tore it down. I don't understand why. It was a beautiful old stone house. I had no idea. That's right at the edge of Uwchlan Township. I was sorry to see it gone. The people that lived there, he was a big executive with one of the food companies and then they bought a home in Bucks County. Really nice people. They were Mormon, which seemed unique at the time. Their son went off to do missionary work and now he's a doctor. Do you remember the Elikers?

Steve: Where?

Carol: Corner Ketch-Lyndell Road, and the house that they moved, Watts'. They moved that house back.

Steve: I was there, but I didn't know many people. I knew the Popjoys, the McClures.

Carol: Which house was that?

Steve: Corner Ketch-Lyndell. Almost down where the trailers are. Carpenter has his business and he's selling motor homes. The old Krapf place. His house is across the road there on top of the hill—big stone house. He worked at Krapf's forever, he was a mechanic there. I remember him from growing up.

Carol: Oh, okay. Now, coming from your house headed towards Hopewell Church, apparently way back down in that field to the right, there's a house back there. Somebody is making it into an unbelievable mansion.

Steve: I don't know what's back there.

Carol: It's amazing how many places exist close to home.

Steve: How about the old pig lady?

Carol: Oh, yes.

Allie: Pig lady? Did she raise pigs?

Steve: That used to be the trash collector. They used to come around with a guy in a beat-up truck. The house is still there.

Carol: It's now a fancy development.

Steve: As soon as you turn off of 322 at the Baptist Church, you go down before the 'S' turns. There's a big development on the side of the road and there's a house back there. We all used to call her "The Pig Lady." When I was growing up, my Aunt Nancy had puppies—half Husky and half German Shepherd. We got one. The dog got big and we were little kids, and it scared us. Too big of a dog for us. She ended up taking that dog. I used to drive back there and it would stink.

Carol: That's what I remember.

Allie: Just because of it being a pig farm?

Steve: They just had a big hole with the trash.

Allie: Oh, they kept the trash on their property?

Steve: Yeah. I don't remember how much we used to pay them—it wasn't a lot. They'd come pick your trash up. If you didn't do that, you'd take it down past Hopewell Church and throw it down there.

Carol: That's what I was going to say. Township Line Road.

Steve: My dad and I used to go down there and shoot guns down there. I haven't been back there in years. I heard that somebody bought all that land because there was talk that they were going to tie that road into Hopewell. Somehow it fell through. I don't know, that's what I was told. But yeah, there was a big dump back there. It used to be a big deal to go to the dump. To root through people's trash? It was great.

Laughter

Steve: It was! There were old car parts and bottles.

Carol: The original recycling.

Steve: I haven't been back there in a long time. I don't even know what's back there anymore.

Carol: I don't either.

Cynette: Is that where the trailer park's at?

Carol: Yes.

Cynette: Bobby Sarmento lived there. Back in high school.

Steve: He passed, didn't he?

Cynette: Yeah.

Steve: That was my first cousin. I just talked to his widow last month. She's doing alright. She's in a townhouse by Shady Maple.

Cynette: When we were growing up, Bobby and his mom lived in that trailer park back there.

Steve: When I was young, they used to live in Johnstown.

Cynette: When he was little.

Steve: Yeah, and then my other aunt lived right next door.

Cynette: Valentino's.

Steve: No, the other Sarmento. A double house right there under the bridge. Back where the ball field is, you'd turn left and they lived right there.

Cynette: That's right.

Allie: You mentioned shooting guns. What were some of the things that you did growing up around here? I know you mentioned going to the farm. Did you go to the movies?

Steve: No. I didn't, not really. A few of the guys and I would play football at the field there—do you know the old Capriotti's? If you're on Corner Ketch and go to the stop sign to go out to 322 and go past where the trailers are, there's a big field there. They just put a big house on it. That used to be our football and baseball field. You always had a rivalry with the one development—the one across the road, on Osborne.

Cynette: Locust Knoll.

Steve: That's it. You'd always have the Locust Knoll people and the Corner Ketch people.

Carol: I've forgotten, but where did Corner Ketch's name come from?

Steve: I don't know.

Allie: I don't either.

Steve: You went to Coatesville.

Allie: No, I went to Downingtown West. We just made the cut off. Our neighborhood went to Downingtown, but right outside of our neighborhood if your house was along the street, you went to Coatesville.

Steve: I'm trying to think where the cut off was when I went to school, because I went to school with a bunch of people from Bondsville. The Baldwin's and the Whiteman's. They all went to the same school I went to.

Cynette: When I was in school, Coatesville and Downingtown had the big rivalry.

Allie: Mine was East and West (Downingtown).

Cynette: Yeah! At the time, there was a Thanksgiving game. It was a big deal.

Steve: Yeah. I would just ride my bike everywhere. Until everyone got older and driving.

Cynette: That's what we did. There wasn't much to do out here in Guthriesville.

Carol: When did they start Good Neighbor Day?

Steve: I have no idea. They built Exton Mall, that was a big thing. You'd go down there when you got your license.

Cynette: Caln Roller Rink?

Steve: Oh, I'd go there. I remember the roller rink when it was in Exton.

Carol: That was the one at West Whiteland Fire Company.

Steve: Isn't that where Rino's is? The floor supposedly is I thought what they put in Caln.

Carol: Yeah. What I was telling Allie is that they would give you a membership card. Do you know why? To keep black people out. In high school, we talked about a group of us going to the roller rink, and this one girl in the club said she wasn't allowed in there. I had no idea that racism existed in this area.

Steve: Not to be crude, but they just weren't around here. I had one friend, Rhodes. Now he goes by Tony. He lived up by Hopewell Church, and he was the only black kid that I knew. In Brandywine Wallace there were maybe two that I knew in all six years there.

Carol: This was in high school. They weren't allowed in the roller rink. I didn't know until this came up, that a group of us were going to go. I was shocked.

Steve: When I was young, we used to like bowling too. Before it burnt.

Cynette: In Thorndale?

Steve: The bowling alley in the diner.

Cynette: The movie theater?

Steve: I remember the drive-in, in Exton by K-Mart. There used to be a movie theater by Jamesway too. That's gone. Dick Thomas'.

Allie: What's that?

Steve: Hot dogs and a little pot of baked beans.