

**East Brandywine Township Oral History Project**

Interviewer(s): Alexandria Proko and Carol Schmidt

Interviewee: Elsie Tarr

Interview Date: March 31, 2018

**Allie:** Do you mind sharing your name with us?

**Elsie:** Elsie Sinex Dixon Tarr.

**Allie:** Thank you! So, we're good to get started here. I guess the first thing is for you to share your childhood. We'll start there. My understanding is that you grew up in East Brandywine?

**Elsie:** I was eleven. I was a city kid.

**Allie:** Oh, okay!

**Elsie:** And she was a city toddler.

**Carol:** We moved to Lyndell when you were eleven, is that what you're saying?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** Her childhood really was in Darby. I was two years old, I think.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** What do you remember about moving? I know going from a "city" to East Brandywine was probably a little bit of a shock.

**Elsie:** It's very rural—at that time. I remember my father driving us up 282 and around Dead Man's Curve, I hid my eyes and I can remember hiding my eyes and crying. I was, you know, terrified.

**Allie:** Now, what is that? What is Dead Man's Curve?

**Elsie:** On 282.

**Carol:** That would be south of Lyndell and past Murder Hollow and then there's a sharp curve right before the Dowlin House that they've been talking about. Does that ring a bell?

**Allie:** Okay, yeah I think I know.

**Carol:** So, after you go around a curve and down the hill, that's where Dowlin Forge Road comes in. Supposedly a body was found there, right?

**Elsie:** I don't know, I don't remember that.

**Carol:** Or it could have been called Dead Man's Curve because it was such a dangerous turn. You were scared then of moving to the country from the city?

**Elsie:** Right, and Pop drove like he always drove.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** Fast?

**Elsie:** He was not particularly careful.

**Carol:** He'd be busy whistling. He was a whistler.

**Allie:** Oh, okay.

**Carol:** So, what did you think when you saw your new home?

**Elsie:** I thought that it was very different from where I grew up. I grew up in a row house in Darby, which was very close to Philadelphia.

**Allie:** Now, when you came out here, where did you go to school?

**Elsie:** I went to school at West Ward for sixth grade and seventh grade. West Ward was in Downingtown, at the other end.

**Allie:** I believe that's what Ross Mowry was saying too. That's where the church is now, and it was taken down, the school? They tore it down, right? He said it was in the middle of Rita's Water Ice and the mattress store. I think it's Messiah Lutheran?

**Elsie:** No, I don't think it was.

**Carol:** It's Messiah Lutheran now, they built a church where West Ward used to be.

**Elsie:** It's across from Priori's (Mattress).

**Allie:** So, that was seventh grade too for you?

**Elsie:** Seventh grade and sixth grade. I completed fifth grade in Darby.

**Allie:** Then you went to Downingtown High School? It's now STEM, but that building?

**Elsie:** Right, yes. That was the new building.

**Carol:** Was it a new building then?

**Elsie:** Oh yeah.

**Carol:** I didn't realize that. It had just been built?

**Elsie:** Right. And it was built for us.

**Carol:** So, you had a cafeteria.

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** That was my first experience with a cafeteria—when I went to high school.

**Allie:** Because of it basically being one room?

**Carol:** Yeah.

**Allie:** How was it compared to the Upper Darby schools? Were there differences that you noticed?

**Elsie:** Darby. Darby is different than Upper Darby. I don't think it felt the same, but it didn't feel very different. In Darby, we got whatever they fed us and at Downingtown we were given choices. I carried my lunch most of the time. I had a Lebanon bologna and cheese sandwich.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** She's a little particular.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** So, that was your go-to, everyday?

**Elsie:** Right. My friend Joan had grown up in the country schools, so it was very different for her.

**Allie:** It was very different for her. We talked to her, as I'm sure you know, and from what she said her experience was very different.

**Carol:** Right. You didn't play in the fields.

**Elsie:** Oh, I played in...In Darby there were woods behind us and a creek.

**Carol:** Oh, there was?

**Elsie:** There was a Darby Creek behind the house.

**Carol:** Then when you moved to Lyndell, you had Lyndell Creek.

**Elsie:** Yes, but my first experience was when Joan told me that I should walk through the cow path, or cow poop. She said it'd make you grow.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** Oh my gosh, she told you that? And you did it?

**Elsie:** Yes. Well, I did it reluctantly. She was a very free spirit. Comfortable with it.

**Allie:** Now, how did the two of you end up meeting? Did you go to school together?

**Elsie:** I think we met at Hopewell.

**Allie:** Church?

**Elsie:** Yes, at Hopewell Methodist Church.

**Allie:** Okay. She's funny.

**Carol:** We talked with Ross Mowry about Reverend Buckwalter. That was before there was a different one. Do you remember?

**Elsie:** Buckwalter was the first minister—that I know. Joan would know earlier ministers. But Buckwalter was very involved with the youth. We went to his parsonage for youth fellowship meetings.

**Carol:** That was on 322, on Horseshoe Pike across the street from Brandywine Country Living, right?

**Elsie:** Right. It was a very small house. In my mind then, it was a big house. Then we went to choir practice at Reba Thompson's. It was across the street and up a bit.

**Carol:** So, that was two doors east of...

**Elsie:** Brandywine Country Living.

**Carol:** Right. They've changed the name a few times. I'm not sure what the current name is. I think Brandywine Country Living.

**Allie:** It sounds familiar, but I'm trying to place it.

**Carol:** It was Agway for a while.

**Allie:** Oh, yes.

**Elsie:** Cropper's at one time.

**Allie:** I remember it being Cropper's. I was very small, but I remember being in there for that. I also remember it being Agway.

**Carol:** Yeah, but there's a white house that's right next to it, a brick house. The people who lived in it, their name was Crandall.

**Allie:** Is this the big one, that sits up on the hill?

**Carol:** No, that's on the opposite side of the street. So, the other side of the Agway was the ministers, the parsonage.

**Allie:** Okay, and that's the one closer to your house?

**Carol:** Yes. The opposite side of the street heading towards Downingtown was Crandall's and then Thompson's.

**Allie:** Not where the Wright Agency is?

**Carol:** No, that was Piersol, right?

**Elsie:** Yes, that was Piersol.

**Carol:** This was Newton Thompson. In fact, he did the tour of East Brandywine when we had the tricentennial. His wife's name was Reba, and she did the choir.

**Elsie:** She did all the music. She played organ and piano.

**Carol:** You and Joan were the star sopranos.

**Allie:** That's wonderful! Joan had a lot of fond memories about singing.

**Elsie:** Right. Joan is still a wonderful singer.

**Allie:** I should have asked her to hum a little something.

**Carol:** Yeah, she sang at my wedding, I think. Or, Cynette's wedding I guess I'm thinking of. She's got a beautiful voice. So, what about in Lyndell? What was across the street? Was the blacksmith's shop still there?

**Elsie:** The blacksmith's shop was there, but Moore had a garage in there.

**Carol:** It was no longer being used as a blacksmith shop.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** That was a double house at that time. Moore lived on one side and Bennich lived on the other side.

**Elsie:** I remember somebody older than that. Bennich moved in after he died.

**Carol:** Oh, okay. I don't remember.

**Elsie:** I can't remember his name, but I can remember his face. He was a nice man.

**Carol:** Then, across the street, the walls were still there from the old woolen mills. Right?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** And then the greenhouse. Carl Bauss.

**Elsie:** Yes, yes. Carl and his wife owned the greenhouse.

**Carol:** That was B-A-U-S-S? He was German.

**Elsie:** I think he was German and she was Polish.

**Carol:** Do you remember the McClure's? On Highspire Road.

**Elsie:** I remember Smyth.

**Carol:** Well, Smyth's were on the opposite side.

**Elsie:** Across from the Grange.

**Carol:** Yeah. At the corner.

**Elsie:** Little Washington and Creek Road.

**Carol:** You remember who lived there then?

**Elsie:** I remember he had no heat and the house was run down and kind of in shambles, really.

**Carol:** Seafus McClure. We were all afraid of him. It was scary there.

**Allie:** Just a sort of scary environment?

**Carol:** I think if kids came around, he yelled.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Do you remember anything going on at the Grange?

**Elsie:** I can remember one time we were in a fashion show.

**Allie:** That's fun.

**Elsie:** I don't remember anything about that. Mom went there a couple of times and then she dropped out. It was a Women's Christian Temperance League.

**Carol:** Oh, they met there?

**Elsie:** Right, and she didn't agree with it. Even though she was a teetotaler, she didn't agree with their stance on drinking.

**Allie:** That's interesting. Do you remember anything about Temperance Hall? Where Carol's house is, right up the street there?

**Carol:** In Guthriesville. The pink house?

**Elsie:** No.

**Carol:** Across from the Medicine Shoppe? It's called Temperance Hall and we were curious.

**Allie:** It must be related somehow.

**Carol:** Yeah. Well, I guess the Women's Temperance League was popular for a while.

**Allie:** See, I never heard anything about it.

**Carol:** I think maybe that would have been started in the time of Prohibition. It was popular for a while, but I don't think it lasted terribly long.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** East Brandywine has always been dry. You can't buy alcohol in East Brandywine. I guess they were rather conservative in East Brandywine. I think we were the lone democrats for a long time.

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** So was the idea of that organization to essentially uphold very Christian values during Prohibition?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** And your mom decided it wasn't for her.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** Our parents weren't that conservative; they were more liberal.

**Allie:** What was your day-to-day as a child? I know you weren't particularly young when you moved here, but you were still pre-teens and just in middle school. What was summer like? Or weekends?

**Elsie:** I adjusted pretty quickly to country living. I loved the country, and I'd never live in the city again. I spent a lot of time in the city because I was sickly and my mother every now and then needed a break, so she'd send me to her sisters. Her sister was my favorite aunt. Aunt Mae. I'd stay with her for a day or two.

**Allie:** She lived in Delaware County as well?

**Carol:** West Philadelphia.

**Allie:** Oh, so she was in the city of West Philadelphia. How was Philly then? Different?

**Elsie:** It was very different. My grandfather was Irish and Protestant Irish, and he married my grandmother who I didn't know because she died young. She was Catholic Irish. She gave up Catholicism to marry him, so he must have been a good man.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** I know Joan mentioned, and I imagined that you did similar things since you hung out frequently, but she mentioned a lot of walking in her free time. She didn't mention bicycling as much as Ross Mowry did. Did you bicycle?

**Elsie:** Not much.

**Allie:** Was that something that the boys did more of?

**Carol:** Well, Elsie's situation was different in that she was asthmatic. She wasn't as involved in outdoor activities or sports as others might have been. Although, you could probably tell a lot of stories about the hospitals at the time.

**Elsie:** Right. Chester County Hospital. We went almost weekly. In the middle of the night.

**Allie:** Oh, wow.

**Carol:** It seemed weekly to me. They'd get up after the middle of the night, maybe around one or two.

**Allie:** Because of asthma attacks?

**Elsie:** Yeah.

**Carol:** They'd put her in an oxygen tent, right?

**Elsie:** They'd give me injections. The injections would make me talk and talk and talk.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** I wonder what it was!

**Allie:** It was probably a steroid with some kind of adrenaline or something, you know what I mean? Sometimes when they give you oxygen, it'll do it too with the steroid.

**Carol:** Yes! I bet it was.

**Allie:** When they do the oxygen with the steroids now, I've had that and it made me one Chatty Kathy. I couldn't stop. I bet you had something like that.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** That would have made her experience different than Joan's. Plus, Joan lived on a farm whereas Elsie...we lived above the store. We didn't have that farm experience.

**Allie:** That's true. You played in the creek, I'm sure?

**Carol:** Oh, absolutely. Loved the Brandywine. Not sure Elsie did, but I loved it.

**Elsie:** Yes, I loved the Brandywine. I didn't love the snakes. The snakes would go down there and would lay on the rocks and sun themselves.

**Allie:** Ugh. Did you ever fish out there?

**Elsie:** No.

**Carol:** I don't remember doing any fishing. It wasn't really deep. I mean, we would swim.

**Elsie:** Joan and I would play in the creek. Warren Reese would come along and play in the creek.

**Allie:** Was that a neighbor?

**Carol:** Yeah. If you are facing Lyndell Store, the road to the right that goes up to Marsh Creek? After you go over a bridge, there's a long lane and you can see the double house. At the time it was a double, I'm not sure if it is now. But, Warren Reese lived on the left and the Pomaibas lived on the right.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Then there were the railroad tracks. The train was still running then, right?

**Elsie:** Right. I can remember the train waking me up in the middle of the night. *Who-who!*

**Carol:** How frequently did it come by?

**Elsie:** I think once a week.

**Carol:** That's all?

**Elsie:** I don't remember, but I think it ran infrequently. It would go to Cornog. I don't know what they were getting at Cornog.

**Carol:** Probably the quarry, I imagine. I've been trying to get a speaker on that railroad. I can't seem to find anyone with information on it. One of these days, I'll find someone.

**Elsie:** We would swim behind the store and we'd swim up the road a ways, towards Downingtown. There was a deeper place there.

**Allie:** This is something we haven't really talked about, Carol and I. We haven't interviewed Carol just yet, but it's interesting to have you both here, from the same family. What was it like growing up at the store? The whole concept is really interesting. I'd be interested to hear what that experience was like, or just things your parents even had to do that a lot of other kids' parents didn't?

**Elsie:** Well, Pop always had an additional person in the store, usually a woman. He would go up and take a nap around noon and he'd take a half an hour nap. He was sharp as a tack.

**Carol:** He was the postmaster as well. The mail would come—I don't know the time—but it's early.

**Elsie:** Seven o' clock. Well, at seven he'd open the store and the post office.

**Carol:** And then it would be open until seven, so that was a long day. He'd have a power nap, or that's what we call it today at least.

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** He would take his power nap, because he was extremely energetic.

**Allie:** What was the process of having a post office? Who brought the mail to him to distribute?

**Elsie:** Somebody came up from Downingtown to Lyndell, and then to Glenmoore and maybe Honey Brook.

**Allie:** Did everyone go up to the counter when they came in, or did they have little mailboxes? How did that work?

**Elsie:** Mailbox. He had a separate area that was the post office.

**Allie:** Was it how it is today, where you have a mailbox at home but then you can get a separate P.O. Box?

**Carol:** No, I think it was only at the post office at that time. Then they started what they called rural delivery, and that was to the homes. At that time, I think it was probably that you had to go to the post office to get your mail. I remember when the mail would come in, he'd sort it and put it into the boxes. Right?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** All the while whistling.

*Laughter*

**Elsie:** I worked in the post office and the store, young.

**Carol:** He butchered then too. I remember he had a butcher block in the back. He would butcher beef, but I think that was all. He'd get in pork and chicken.

**Allie:** So was it a small grocery store?

**Carol:** I mean, people would come in for their weekly groceries. Believe it or not. On the outside, he kept the produce on a porch area. Then, when we first moved there, there was an ice cream fountain area.

**Elsie:** He put that in after.

**Carol:** He put that in?

**Elsie:** Yes, he put it in for Aunt Pearl. Aunt Pearl was running the ice cream shop, and she didn't do it well.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** There were rows of canned goods and so forth, and the butchering was at the back of the store, right?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** When you moved there, it was already a functioning store that he took over, or did he convert it into one?

**Elsie:** It was a functioning store. It was the oldest functioning store until they closed it, recently.

**Carol:** Not too many years ago, I don't think.

**Allie:** I never went in. I missed my chance.

**Carol:** No?

**Allie:** Nope.

**Elsie:** He had penny candy and cigarettes.

**Carol:** He had a cash register, but he could do it in his head. People would put things on the counter, do you remember that? He could look at it and say how much they owed before he even put it into the cash register.

**Elsie:** They could phone in orders and he would write it down on a bag. He'd put the prices down next to the items on the bag and he was the fastest. I'm a math genius, I'm an accountant, but he was really fast.

**Carol:** You got it from him, huh?

**Allie:** That's wild.

**Carol:** He would still deliver then.

**Allie:** How did people do that, just call him and say what they wanted?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** I remember us delivering groceries up to Milford Mills.

**Allie:** The two of you.

**Carol:** Riding along with him, I should say. We'd take groceries up to the house that was Boo Boo Hoff's place. It was a mansion there and at that time was a camp for Jewish children. I don't remember what it was before that. Do you remember?

**Elsie:** Jewish people would come out for the week.

**Allie:** Like a retreat?

**Carol:** A resort.

**Allie:** Did your mom help out at the store?

**Elsie:** She really didn't help out at the store very much.

**Carol:** If she was here, she'd tell you different.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** She did help some. Some.

**Elsie:** I have a picture of Mom and Pop and Carol as a baby in my room. In the picture, you can see cereal behind them on the shelves. It was nineteen cents. A box of cereal.

**Allie:** It's like five dollars now.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** Did you have anything you really enjoyed at the store? What penny candy was your favorite?

**Elsie:** I liked the coconut things.

**Allie:** Macaroons?

**Carol:** No, these were oblong, right? Weren't they pink, brown, and white?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** Licorice?

**Carol:** No, they were rectangles.

**Elsie:** They were coconut.

**Carol:** They were made of coconut and they were three colors. I don't know what they were called, do you?

**Elsie:** I don't know.

**Carol:** They were just sort of a sweet with coconut.

**Allie:** I'll have to look them up. The only thing that I can think of is those colorful licorice with the dark in the middle and then the circle? It's like a coconut or some kind of grainy coconut flavor.

**Carol:** No, these were softer.

**Elsie:** I remember cranking.

**Carol:** Sausage? Ground beef?

**Allie:** Pasta?

**Elsie:** No, in the store. On the porch. There was a big barrel with a crank. It was a syrup.

**Carol:** A syrup?

**Allie:** Like molasses?

**Elsie:** Yes, molasses.

**Carol:** Oh, so it worked like a pump probably. I don't know, I don't remember that.

**Elsie:** I know the expression, slow as molasses in January. I can remember, in January it would...

**Carol:** So, it released it? It wasn't grinding it? I was picturing something else.

**Allie:** Yeah, I was picturing coffee beans or something. But, this was storing it.

**Carol:** We had gas pumps too.

**Allie:** Oh wow, really?

**Carol:** We knew how to pump gas long before most women.

**Allie:** It's a good skill to have!

*Laughter*

**Elsie:** We had a soda box. You'd reach into the soda box and pull out the bottle.

**Carol:** Oh, yeah. Instead of a vending machine, it was a freezer size and shape, but it wasn't a freezer. It'd be cold and you would reach in and pull the soda out and drop your money in the little coin thing, right?

**Elsie:** You would pay for it. I don't think it was a vending machine kind of thing, you'd just pay for it.

**Carol:** That's probably right.

**Elsie:** Like fifty cents.

**Carol:** Then they were all returns, because they were glass bottles. So, one of the jobs that we had was sorting the soda bottles that people returned into the proper type.

**Elsie:** We'd do that in the basement.

**Carol:** In the basement, yeah. Then there was somebody who would pick up the returnables, the empty bottles, because Dad would get credit of some kind. He'd give credit to people too that brought them in for the next load of sodas, right?

**Elsie:** I can remember a lot of kids bringing empty soda bottles back. They probably got them in the basement.

**Carol:** Yeah, they might have. They might have pulled a fast one and gotten them out of the basement and then brought them up into the store and got their money back.

**Allie:** That's funny.

**Elsie:** They got the money back several times.

**Allie:** Another thing that I wondered, was there a milkman, or did you carry it in the store?

**Elsie:** The milkman delivered milk.

**Allie:** To the store?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** And it was sold there?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** And again, glass bottles. We were better recyclers back then.

**Allie:** It sounds like it. We should get back to that, we really should.

**Carol:** We should.

**Allie:** My fridge would look much nicer too, if we just had glass bottles everywhere. Speaking of refrigerators, did you keep your kitchen fully stocked? Or when it was time to make dinner did you just go downstairs to get what you'd need?

**Carol:** We usually ate what hadn't sold, seriously!

**Allie:** That makes sense.

**Carol:** You know, if the lettuce were about to go that meant you were having salad that night or if the beef didn't sell, you were going to have roast beef. Right?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** I was just wondering about that.

**Elsie:** I can remember Dilworth. Mrs. Dilworth came in with the eggs in a basket.

**Allie:** Was that the local farm?

**Elsie:** Yes, and eggs in a basket. She'd trade them with Dad, she'd barter for groceries.

**Carol:** How about that. I don't remember that. Dilworth's had a farm on Dilworth Road. Actually, I think they still do. I think a son still lives there.

**Allie:** Is that the one tucked behind the park?

**Carol:** Yes. Wait, no. Opposite side of the road.

**Elsie:** It's at the end of the road.

**Allie:** There's a tiny bridge before you get to the end of that street?

**Carol:** Not that far. This is up near the pavilions and park. Just at the edge of that, as you're passing the parks, there's a lane on the right and it's a little bit back there but you can see some of it.

**Allie:** Oh, okay!

**Elsie:** Who is there now?

**Carol:** I thought Larry lived there, no?

**Elsie:** No, he lives in Elverson or Morgantown.

**Carol:** Oh.

**Allie:** That's interesting though, that'd she would come in and barter groceries. I guess it worked!

Use what you have.

**Elsie:** She was used to doing that. My Dad bought the store from a couple of old ladies. Shock. Mrs. Shock.

**Carol:** They lived with us for a little while, right?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Mom wasn't too happy about that.

**Allie:** So, he purchased it from them and then they stayed there? How did that work?

**Carol:** I guess.

**Allie:** Interesting! So, they didn't have anywhere to go when he purchased it?

**Carol:** My Uncle Warren is the one that found the store. Our dad was a manager for what was called American Stores which is formerly A&P. I don't know if you've ever heard of that?

**Allie:** I've heard of it.

**Elsie:** ACME.

**Carol:** Oh, I thought it was American.

**Elsie:** No, it was ACME.

**Carol:** Okay, it was ACME.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** He managed these different stores and my uncle, his brother-in-law, said that he'd found this store and it's a really good deal and you might want to consider buying it. So he did.

**Allie:** Very cool.

**Carol:** I don't know where the Shock women went, do you? I don't think they were there too long, maybe a few months or something.

**Elsie:** No, I think it was a couple weeks.

**Carol:** Couple weeks? That was enough.

**Elsie:** In your little mind it was probably longer.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** I have no idea. I don't remember at all! I just heard all about it and Mom didn't like it at all. It wasn't a very big house, so it must have been very cozy with them there. There were only two bedrooms on that first floor, so I don't know where they slept. We had an older brother. Dad put an addition on the back, but it wasn't there.

**Elsie:** Right. Popjoy. Allan Popjoy put that on.

**Allie:** Do you remember having them there, staying with you when you moved in?

**Elsie:** Yes, I think it was a couple weeks.

**Allie:** I'm trying to think here too. You said people would do a weekly grocery trip?

**Carol:** Yeah, at the end of the week on payday. They'd go through the store with a cart and get their weekly groceries. Right?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Of course, with so many people growing their own things, your weekly groceries probably weren't how they are today.

**Allie:** Maybe more staples.

**Elsie:** I remember when the A&P in Downingtown went in. I'm having trouble with names, but his son is a doctor and they went to school with you?

**Carol:** Sims?

**Elsie:** Yes. I remember Sims. Pop went out and started his car and he was going to the A&P.

**Carol:** Oh, jeez. That was adding insult to injury, wasn't it?

**Elsie:** Pop was often the taxi driver or ambulance driver.

**Allie:** Was that because a lot of people didn't know how to drive, or they didn't have cars?

**Carol:** Well, he was home. He was there during the day, so if men were at work with their vehicle, people would come to the store.

**Allie:** Oh, okay. That's right. Most households had one car.

**Carol:** I remember him walking up and down the aisles with a baby having convulsions and holding the baby. Pomaibas' child.

**Elsie:** I don't remember that.

**Carol:** Their child had convulsions, so she'd come over to the store and Dad would calm the baby down and I remember him walking the aisles with the baby. Then there was a farm accident, I think at Kaiser's? He went there and I don't remember if they transported the person that was hurt or if they waited for an ambulance. But you know, because you're there during the day...

**Elsie:** Right. Well, when he sold the store, they had a parade up Creek Road. He was the "Mayor of Lyndell" and he was passing the keys off to Jim Smyth.

**Carol:** Jim Smyth bought the store. He had been Vice President at Sunoco Paper Company? Was it Sunoco then? We had a little attached area that they made into an Irish Import's shop. Mom and Dad took several trips with them to Ireland. But then they bought the store.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** They didn't have it very long.

**Elsie:** No, they didn't have it long.

**Carol:** Dad built the campground after the A&P came in, because Pop could see that times were changing and he needed to move towards more of a deli. So, he built the campground, Frank's Folly, which had really been a swamp. He did it at the right time, because camping became a big thing then, so it was a good time for it and he loved doing it. He'd work in the store during the day then go work in the campground at night.

**Allie:** Wow.

**Carol:** So, he needed his little naps.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** Did you ever meet interesting people because of that experience? Either the campground or the store?

**Elsie:** Jim Croce.

**Carol:** Well, Jim Croce lived on Highspire Road. I didn't live there then, but he would come to the store.

**Elsie:** He made his first record while living there.

**Allie:** Oh, wow.

**Carol:** That was *Time in a Bottle* and *Photographs and Memories*. You'd know some of the songs, kind of some classics. Probably from weddings.

**Allie:** I'm thinking, yeah. I'm a wedding and event planner, that's why she said weddings.

**Elsie:** Oh, okay.

**Allie:** Did you have friends that would come in? Carol and I discussed how either your church or workplace would have been social hubs at the time. Were you frequently there and friends would come in? Did kids grocery shop with their parents, or was it just the moms?

**Elsie:** Not many kids.

**Carol:** Actually, it was often the dads that did the grocery shopping. The moms would give them a list.

**Allie:** Oh, really?

**Carol:** That's the way that I remember it.

**Elsie:** I remember kids coming in and stealing groceries for their parents.

**Allie:** Oh.

**Carol:** Well, Pop delivered a lot of groceries...

**Elsie:** He delivered to a lot of people that he knew were hard up. He'd get a box of groceries for them and put them on the porch, anonymously. Often times when they were gone.

**Allie:** Oh, that was very nice of him.

**Carol:** Or he would give them credit. They'd come in to get what they needed and he would put it on credit.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Someone contacted me a while back and said our family would not have managed had it not been for him.

**Allie:** Wow, that was a very good-hearted thing for him to do.

**Carol:** Yeah, he was good-hearted. Then at the campground, there were children that would come in and I don't know if it was that they had a disability or something, but they'd come in and he'd let them come camping and then he'd take them for ice cream.

**Elsie:** He'd go and play with them and take them for a ride or whatever.

**Allie:** And the downstairs was a soda fountain? Was it another social hub?

**Elsie:** It wasn't a soda fountain for very long.

**Carol:** No, I hardly remember it. I think they decided it wasn't worth the space that it took up. It wasn't profiting. It seemed like a good idea, something to try and he was always trying something new.

**Elsie:** He was trying something new till the day he died.

**Allie:** He sounds like he was smart. He stayed ahead of the times and was an astute businessman.

**Carol:** Right, yes. Very.

**Elsie:** And he didn't have a high school diploma.

**Carol:** Yeah, he quit school to help his family during the Depression. I often think when he built that campground with no engineering background...he turned a swamp into a campground.

**Elsie:** I remember the pond. CeCe came out and said he should do something with the pond. He just ignored it. CeCe was irritated about it, and I said that that was my dad.

**Carol:** CeCe was her boyfriend at the time.

**Elsie:** Right. He was a landscape architect.

**Allie:** Oh okay. So he had a lot of ideas.

**Carol:** Of doing it the right way. Dad did things his way.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** It worked! His favorite saying was, 'It's good enough!' It usually was.

**Elsie:** At Hopewell Church, the Passion Play was originally in the basement and nobody wanted to be Judas. He said, 'What the hell, somebody's gotta do it!'

**Carol:** He did it, he was Judas. For many years.

**Elsie:** And Pud Axe was the director, and Pop drove Pud Axe crazy because he would go down to the campground. He had a spot at the beginning and a spot at the end.

**Carol:** Judas had something to do at the beginning and at the end, and Dad fit it into the campground work. They would have preferred that he just come and stay the whole time, but he didn't.

**Allie:** Oh my gosh, he would leave and come back?

**Carol:** Yeah!

*Laughter*

**Allie:** I can see why they were a little stressed out.

**Elsie:** But he would make it every time.

**Allie:** Wow.

**Elsie:** I remember watching it the first time, and Judas was so nasty. That just wasn't my Dad.

**Carol:** But he played the part very well. He threw the money!

**Allie:** So, he was an actor too! Going back to conversations that have happened with other people, I know you came to school a little older around here, but did you find that teachers disciplined in school? Frequently, or not?

**Elsie:** The teachers were very strong, but we made fun of them.

*Laughter*

**Elsie:** I can remember the one teacher would straighten her girdle every now and then.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** What about the football games?

**Elsie:** Oh, yes. I went to the football games often. I was really enthused about football games, but I didn't know anything about football. I don't know anything about football now, either.

**Allie:** It was more the spirit of it all, and people being there?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** How many were in your graduating class?

**Elsie:** 126.

**Carol:** They still get together, some of them.

**Allie:** Wow, that's right. It's incredible.

**Carol:** So, there were 126 in your class. How many are still living? Any idea?

**Elsie:** They're all over the country.

**Carol:** There's a small group. Elsie was very involved in the alumni association.

**Elsie:** The reunion committee. I was not involved with the alumni. I was involved in the reunion committee.

**Allie:** That sort of segues into my question about school clubs. I know you were involved in your church's choir, were you involved in anything at school?

**Elsie:** I was in the newspaper club. We took a trip to New York City one time.

**Allie:** That's pretty nice! I was in the newspaper club and they didn't take us to New York!

**Carol:** Where in New York? What was the purpose?

**Elsie:** We went to Columbia University. We stayed briefly because we had other things to do. There were about five or six of us that were in the newspaper club.

**Allie:** Were you looking at it as a prospective college, or was there a reason for being there?

**Elsie:** No, they had some sort of organization that they were trying to get high schools to write newspapers.

**Allie:** So, sort of a high school convention? Did you have particular topics you were in charge of writing?

**Elsie:** I can't remember. Chorus too. Joan and I were involved in chorus.

**Allie:** Did the school put on performances?

**Elsie:** Oh, yeah. That was the big thing every year. I think I tried out for the drama team, but didn't get it.

**Carol:** Do you remember the movie theatre in Downingtown? Did you go to that?

**Elsie:** Yes. It was on Brandywine Avenue, and it's still a building there.

**Allie:** It's a dance studio now. I think people told us it was called The Roosevelt?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** Did you go frequently?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** Joan told us that you and her went to a... What was it?

**Allie:** A radio contest?

**Elsie:** Oh, that was in Coatesville. The Auditorium.

**Carol:** The theatre in Coatesville was called The Auditorium. That's torn down now, there's senior living apartments there now.

**Allie:** Okay.

**Elsie:** That's where Janice came from.

**Carol:** That's her old roommate (at Hickory House). I heard you sang and giggled?

**Elsie:** Right, we sang.

**Carol:** You forgot the words or something?

**Elsie:** We forgot the words. We practiced all the way over there and we forgot one chorus and we forgot the same thing.

**Allie:** So you both just looked at each other and laughed?

**Elsie:** Right, we just giggled!

**Carol:** I think another thing that was popular at the time was various social clubs. I think in Downingtown was The Moose, the lodge. Dad was in Tall Cedars of Lebanon in Coatesville.

**Elsie:** Yes, in Coatesville.

**Carol:** Was that part of the Masonic Lodge?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Dad was a Grand Tall Cedar. That was the title. I remember a banquet. It was this big banquet and there was a guy singing. Do you remember that? "Que Sera, Sera," that's what he was singing. I was a kid and singing along to it. He recognized that I was singing along and came over to me with the mic.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** Did you always live in this area, or did you move away and come back?

**Elsie:** I moved away and came back. I lived in Honey Brook when I first got married.

**Allie:** What year was that?

**Elsie:** 1956. My daughter was born that year. I was the first one that was able to graduate pregnant.

**Allie:** Wow, in Downingtown?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** Were you showing? Was it visible?

**Elsie:** No, I wasn't showing. I wasn't showing until the end.

**Carol:** But you knew, and the school knew.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** Why did the school know?

**Elsie:** They just gossiped.

**Carol:** But they let you graduate.

**Elsie:** I was a good student. Because I was close to graduation, I was able to graduate. I got married in April and I was only about a month pregnant.

**Carol:** That's what you did then.

**Elsie:** That's what you did then, yeah.

**Carol:** What were some of the classes that you had in high school? Were they different? At least some of them were, I'm sure.

**Elsie:** Typing and bookkeeping and history and English and science.

**Carol:** At that time, you weren't as encouraged to go to college. You didn't really think too much about it.

**Elsie:** I was going to go to college. I had college books out around. Pop told me that neither of them had gone to college and that I would succeed even if I didn't go to college.

**Allie:** That's nice, because I know today it's not like that. It's expected that you go to college now and it's a pressure and you feel like you have to. I don't think college is for everybody. I think there's a lot of people who do really good things without a college education. Even with a college education now, it's about experience. So all of these people with degrees are fighting each other for jobs.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** The companies then would rather have someone with experience than the degree.

**Carol:** Yes.

**Allie:** It's interesting, hearing that dynamic of your father saying, it's okay if you don't go. He was sort of the example for you, showing you the things that you can do without that, which is really cool.

**Elsie:** We had an older brother, and he was four years older than me and a lot older than Carol.

**Carol:** I was an after the war baby.

**Elsie:** She was an afterthought.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** I lived more like an only child. Especially with Elsie getting married early.

**Allie:** Right. Were you out of the house when you got married and moved to Honey Brook right after?

**Elsie:** I think we stayed in my bedroom for a week or two and then got an apartment.

**Carol:** That was near Eagle. It's actually off of Little Conestoga Road, wouldn't it be?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** As you're going into Eagle, this area just before it was called Font. You would hardly know that it was its own village now, but similar to Milford Mills.

**Elsie:** Right, and we were there about a year and the landlord's son was sort of goofy and we felt like he was bothering me so then we moved down the road here.

**Carol:** Oh yeah, I remember that now.

**Elsie:** The schoolhouse.

**Allie:** An old schoolhouse?

**Carol:** Yeah, it's across from Little Anthony's. Across the street, I think just before you'd turn into Little Anthony's. Now they have a fence that pretty much keeps you from seeing the place.

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** The place looks different now. It was stucco then, and now it's exposed stone. I think Sarmiento lived there.

**Elsie:** Ginny?

**Carol:** Mhm. Allie did her thesis on Bondsville Mill and I was telling her that if you grew up in Lyndell, you pretty much knew Lyndell and didn't know anything about Guthriesville or Bondsville necessarily.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Do you remember anything about Bondsville? Joan remembered a little because of living in Guthriesville.

**Elsie:** I can't remember.

**Carol:** The mill was operating then still, right? Bondsville Mill, didn't they make plush? They called it plush then and it was like an upholstery? Or jeans? You would know more about that.

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** Mhm. A combination of things at different times. During the war, you weren't living here yet, right?

**Elsie:** No, I was in Darby.

**Allie:** Right. So, they were putting things together, contributing things like the lining of the airliner jackets. I don't know if it was a polyester, I can't remember the fabric type. Things like that though. It was always sort of fabric-based. Towards the '50s it was plush and lining vehicle seats.

**Carol:** Yeah, upholstery or something.

**Allie:** Yes, things like that. I'd have to look back at my notes, it's been a while since I've refreshed my memory on all of it.

**Carol:** There were row houses there, across from the mill, where the workers lived. But you don't remember too much about Bondsville?

**Elsie:** No.

**Carol:** How about Guthriesville?

**Elsie:** I remember in Guthriesville that they had the store.

**Carol:** Earl Bryant?

**Elsie:** Bryant. He had a store with his wife and the luncheonette.

**Carol:** Flossie Bryant.

**Elsie:** Flossie Bryant. We went there after choir.

**Allie:** After church choir?

**Elsie:** Yes, and I would get a hot dog with pickles on it.

**Carol:** They had an ice cream fountain there too, didn't they?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Carol:** Did you know it's going to be an Italian restaurant now?

**Allie:** Oh, where Mama Lena's was? Yeah, I heard about that.

**Elsie:** That Millie worked there.

**Carol:** Millie? Milicent Krapf?

**Elsie:** Yes.

**Allie:** You'd mentioned a parade in Lyndell where your father was "Mayor." Was that something the town did at the time?

**Carol:** No, that wasn't official.

**Allie:** Oh, okay. So it was a dubbed title.

**Elsie:** He was the "Mayor of Lyndell," loosely.

**Carol:** It was more for fun.

**Allie:** So, when they had a parade, what was it? Did the town put things on like that?

**Carol:** I don't think it was much of a parade.

**Elsie:** No!

**Allie:** So, the town didn't do things like that, in Lyndell?

**Elsie:** Village—it wasn't a town.

**Allie:** Right, village. So, if anything big happened it'd be in Downingtown.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** There weren't a lot of parades in Downingtown. Probably a lot of what they have today. Good Neighbor Day and Fourth of July. A lot of Italians at that time in Downingtown. In fact, there's an

interesting program that the Downingtown Historical Society puts on about the immigration in Downingtown. At the time, it was Italian immigration.

**Elsie:** Most of the kids I went to school with were Italian.

**Carol:** Me too.

**Allie:** Even for my mom too. She graduated in the mid '80s and even then most of her classmates were Italian. Her family thought they were more Italian than they actually are, which we have since found out from DNA testing.

**Carol:** They weren't?

**Allie:** Not as Italian as they thought. We're part of the LaSorda's by marriage. The LaSorda's are pretty Italian, but not actually as much as they even thought. But you know, all kinds of stuff. My grandfather thought that they were Italian, and that was sort of that time period. She grew up sort of how you did, Carol, where all her siblings were ten to fifteen years older than her, so by the time that they moved here she was basically an only child.

**Elsie:** What is your mother's maiden name?

**Allie:** Paiva.

**Elsie:** Paiva.

**Allie:** My grandparents were Catherine and Thurman, but he went by Bob.

*Laughter*

**Allie:** She was a seamstress.

**Carol:** She's friends with Cheryl Schroeder. They went to school together.

**Elsie:** And is your father?

**Allie:** My father wasn't from here. He's Polish. He's from Detroit originally. Kind of a hike, not local.

**Carol:** What brought them here?

**Allie:** My grandmother still lives there, but when his parents divorced, he and his sisters followed his father out here. Now all of our family is pretty local. You never know who will know my grandparents.

**Carol:** Where did they live?

**Allie:** I always get the road wrong, but I think you said North Guthriesville Road. In the corner house.

**Carol:** Where the Souden's lived, on the corner?

**Allie:** Alice!

**Carol:** Yes!

**Allie:** I used to know Alice.

**Carol:** I had her as a teacher.

**Allie:** That's so wild. It was Alice on that corner, but if you'd drive up further you'd see Betty Spence's houses. They were best friends with my grandmother. Further down is the Timberlake community on the left, and her house was the one on the corner just before it. It was once a little farmette.

**Elsie:** There was a seamstress that lived there.

**Allie:** That was my grandmother. She's since passed. I was in second grade when she passed.

**Elsie:** I took a few things to her. I don't know how I met her, but I had contact with her.

**Allie:** My understanding is that I don't think a lot of people were doing that around here, so I think she had a lot of people going to her. That was her job, that's what she did.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** Our mother was an artist, and she painted a lot of homes and that was one. People would come to her, and she would paint a picture of their home.

**Allie:** That's so neat!

**Carol:** She would do a lot of others. It was funny because I posted on Facebook at some time and somebody said that they had a painting of a picture that our mother did. They sent me the picture and I posted it and then all of these people started saying that they had one too. It was really neat.

**Allie:** Did she do the ones that were on the little wooden blocks?

**Carol:** No, that was Harry Yost that used to do those.

**Allie:** Oh okay. My mom and I went to a yard sale and we got a couple of those. I wasn't sure if there was any correlation.

**Carol:** Oh, no she did oils. A standard size for oils. Then she was into watercolors for a long time.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** There was a woman on Hopewell Road named Manning that used to give art lessons.

**Elsie:** Yes, I couldn't remember her name. Vivian Piersol. Mom and Vivian met at Manning's.

**Carol:** Oh, did they? Is that where they met? There's a woman (Vivian Piersol) here (at Hickory House); in fact, she's over one hundred.

**Elsie:** She's one hundred and one.

**Allie:** Wow.

**Carol:** She and my mother were best friends. I thought at one point we should talk to her, because I know she was sharp as a tack. They lived in Glenmoore, but it was on the edge of East Brandywine. Where did she grow up?

**Elsie:** In Glenmoore. She lived in the village of Glenmoore.

**Carol:** Oh, I didn't know. She was an artist also.

**Elsie:** She was fantastic.

**Allie:** Is that how they met, because they were both artists?

**Carol:** The classes that they went to at Manning's on Hopewell Road. I always think about it when I go past that house.

**Elsie:** Right.

**Allie:** I thought of something I didn't ask earlier. For the store, where did your dad get the groceries that he ordered? Was it local, or a large company? Did it come by truck?

**Elsie:** He ordered pretty much by a company that was wholesaling to him. Then they would deliver it weekly or semi-weekly. Fresh produce or meat came by a separate person.

**Carol:** And we know where he got his eggs, right?

*Laughter*

**Allie:** Dilworth!

**Elsie:** Well, Dilworth some of it.

**Allie:** That's funny. I never would have thought of that. It makes sense I guess!

**Elsie:** People did some things the old-fashioned way, and that's when we moved out here. So, he was probably in between the old-fashioned way.

**Allie:** He probably didn't want to tell this woman who'd been bartering eggs for groceries that she couldn't do it anymore!

*Laughter*

**Carol:** Yeah, probably.

**Allie:** Is there anything else that you think should go into this?

**Elsie:** I remember Jay Lammey.

**Allie:** Why do I know that name? I think it came up before.

**Elsie:** His daughters lived on Corner Ketch-Lyndell Road. Two of the daughters. He was the chairman of the bank.

**Allie:** Which bank, Downingtown?

**Elsie:** Downingtown National Bank. Pop did all his banking with him. He said that when he bought the campground, he bought that piece of swampland and he said that Jay Lammey said that in typical "East Brandywine language." East Brandywine has a language of its own. He said that 'no beagle dog would go in there and come back out of that swampland.'

**Carol:** Oh, I never heard that. That's funny.

**Elsie:** He said to him, 'Frank, you're a good businessman so I'm going to loan you the money.' Because, Pop used all his money to buy groceries that day and he bought it at an auction. I don't know how much.

**Allie:** How about that.

**Carol:** That's why he called it Frank's Folly, because people thought that he was crazy to do it.

**Elsie:** Yes, he did very well with that campground.

**Allie:** It's still a campground, right?

**Carol:** Yes, different name, but yes. He managed to do well for himself. They had a lot of wonderful trips, and a nice home up on Highspire Road after they retired.

**Elsie:** A few years ago, Bobby Spatola told me a story about his house across the street. Across the road. You didn't call it a street, you'd call it a road. But anyhow, my parents bought the house that his father built.

**Carol:** His father built the house, yeah. Joe, wasn't it.

**Elsie:** Joe Spatola.

**Allie:** Is that who the park is named after?

**Carol:** You know where the Christmas Tree Farm is? That's Spatola's property. I guess they actually started it, but I don't know if they still own it.

**Allie:** In Glenmoore, technically?

**Carol:** Little Washington and Lyndell Road.

**Allie:** Oh, I'm thinking of somewhere different.

**Carol:** So if you went past, yes you're right. Marshall Road. If you went past the Spring Mill Farm, the one that's national designation in East Brandywine?

**Allie:** I don't know that area very well.

**Carol:** If you go down Dilworth Road, it dead ends on Little Washington. You turn right, go over that bridge and as you're going over the hill, the tree farm is on your right and that's what Spatola started.

**Allie:** Okay.

**Carol:** You come up and Highspire Road crosses it. So, if you turned right, towards Lyndell, Spatola lived on the right and there were several homes on the left. Mom and Dad bought that from Joe Spatola, Bobby Spatola's father. It was across the street at that time, and that's where they retired.

**Elsie:** Anyhow, Pop heard that there was a bunch of money that Joe Spatola had hidden in the house.

**Carol:** Yeah, that's what Bob told him.

**Elsie:** But he didn't.

**Carol:** Dad never found it.

**Elsie:** Mom said that she called Bobby and said, 'You come over here and tell Frank that that was a big lie, because he's trying to find the money'.

*Laughter*

**Carol:** I remember one of the first things he did was put on a greenhouse and he was experimenting with hydroponic gardening.

**Allie:** Of course he was!

*Laughter*

**Carol:** He was an interesting guy. It didn't work out too well. He did a worm farm when they decided to put in Marsh Creek. He figured they'd need bait, so he started a bait farm. That was next to the

railroad tracks, where the creamery was. He built a worm farm and he sold the bait to the fisherman.

**Elsie:** Cindy did a cartoon and Mom wasn't solvent about the cartoon.

**Allie:** Who is Cindy?

**Elsie:** My daughter.

**Carol:** She's an artist as well.

**Allie:** It sounds like you had an interesting and different upbringing than a lot of other people who grew up in this area.

**Carol:** We did, yes.

**Allie:** It was such an agriculturally-focused spot that to come from more of a business-oriented setting is different for just about every other kid in this township. And you came from the city, so your childhood and memories are different too.

**Carol:** I remember our mother saying that so many people that lived in East Brandywine had lived here several generations, and so it took a long time to feel like they fit in. They didn't feel like people welcomed them because they were from Delaware County. They felt like outsiders for a long time. You'll have to find out if your grandmother ever felt that way.

**Allie:** I'll have to ask my mom if she ever heard anything about that from them, because they came from Levittown.

**Carol:** It'd be interesting to know if they felt that way as well, because I know Mom did. I don't know about Dad. I don't think he felt out of place anywhere, he just was the kind of person that could...

**Allie:** Acclimate?

**Carol:** Yeah. Mom was more introverted than he was.

**Elsie:** Pop was in the service during the war, but he didn't go overseas because he had a hernia for some reason or another.

**Carol:** Well, he was older too and he had two children. I mean, when they were drafting farther along, he was not... He was a Mess Sergeant and then he was a Sergeant of the NCOA Club.

**Allie:** I don't know what that is.

**Elsie:** Non-Commissioned Officers. It was basically a nightclub. I can remember having parties there, and the BBQ's. I was only little.

**Carol:** I know that's why he was very opposed to gambling, because it upset him that guys would get their paychecks, and there they'd have what they called the one-armed bandits?

**Elsie:** Right.

**Carol:** The slot machines. He would see them spend their whole paycheck on these things and then have nothing. That really bothered him, so he didn't really have any interest in gambling in any way, because he saw it as a problem.

**Allie:** He watched people squander it away.

**Elsie:** We were in Texas during the war. Two years. I was five and in kindergarten when we moved to Texas.