

East Brandywine Township Oral History Project

Interviewer(s): Alexandria Proko and Carol Schmidt

Interviewee: Tom McKeever

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Tom: My name is Tom McKeever. I've lived on Hopewell Road for fifty-some years.

Carol: Which house?

Tom: You know where Tkachick's place is? My driveway is right across from the intersection. A split-level, in the woods.

Carol: Oh, okay! And your wife's name?

Tom: Florence. She passed away three months ago.

Allie: I'm so sorry.

Tom: Florence Smith. John, I think he's at the township, he's a nephew. Cathy and Ruthie? Ruthie is a sister-in-law.

Allie: Quite a bit of family in the township.

Tom: Yeah. Skip VanLew and Matt? Skip's a nephew and Matt is a great-nephew. Skip has been in here with the fire company forever.

Allie: So, what brought you to the township?

Tom: I lived on Highspire Road when I was a kid. Lived in Thorndale when I was a kid. My wife was born in the house just below the dam crest, when they put in the dam. That's where the Smith's were. She had nine brothers and sisters.

Carol: Is that the house that is boarded up now?

Tom: No, it's been torn down. You can see the foundation.

Carol: There's one that's all boarded up, and it breaks my heart.

Tom: Oh, no. This one is over the hill. All the way over the hill, and then when you get to the base of the dam, theirs was the first one at the top of the hill.

Carol: Ah, okay.

Tom: There was Steven's, Brown's, and Turner's.

Carol: You said you lived on Highspire?

Tom: When I was a kid.

Allie: Did your parents grow up in this area, or did they move here?

Tom: Sure did. My mom was from Downingtown, and she graduated from Downingtown High school, as did my wife and I. When I got out of the Air Force, I came back home here. We were looking to build a house, and my father-in-law was friendly with old Popjoy. Charlie Popjoy? He talked to him and he said he had a piece of woods that he'd sell to me, so that's what I bought. Four and a half acres of woods.

Laughter

Tom: Been there ever since.

Allie: What did your parents do?

Tom: My mother and father divorced early on, when I was maybe two years old.

Carol: Wow, that was unusual!

Tom: Yeah, it wasn't popular then. She worked at the Bondsville Mill, when it was Collins'.

Allie: How exciting!

Tom: I brought a picture of a guard for you to look at.

Carol: Oh my gosh, a guard at the mill!

Allie: Do you care if I take a picture with my phone?

Carol: It says, “Grover Laird. Guard of Collins and Aikman, Bondsville.”

Tom: Then she worked for a manufacturing plant in Downingtown for a little during the war. We were all in the service.

Allie: What did your mom do there?

Tom: I don’t know what she did at Collins’, but she ran a drill press at the manufacturing company. I don’t know what they did there (Bondsville). They made material. Draperies and upholstery for cars. I don’t know what her actual job there was though. She was in this area though and had a lot of family. I was just at a birthday party yesterday and there must have been about a hundred people there, all relatives of one side or the other. The Smith’s family reunion is a week from today. There’s a bunch of us around.

Carol: Now, I remember Fred Smith. Is he related?

Tom: I don’t think so.

Carol: Wasn’t there a teacher, Mrs. Smith?

Tom: Yeah, Esther. “Skeeter.” That’s the next one older than Florence. She was next to the youngest. Her older sister, Linda, worked at the bank in Downingtown—retired now. A couple of them have passed on. Skip’s mother was her oldest sister, and she’s gone. The next one, she’s in a nursing home—Mabel. Jean, she lives over on Norwood Road. Skeet, or Esther, she was a teacher, and

she's retired. I think that's all of them. It was six girls and four boys. One brother, Gump, was fire chief. That's one of her brothers, my brother-in-law. He's gone.

Carol: Where did he ever get the name?

Tom: He was a junior. Old man Smith...there was a cartoon character by that name. It hung on I guess.

Carol: Keith Smith came and spoke on the street names of West Chester.

Tom: That's a nephew.

Carol: He came and talked to us about historical markers. I remember him telling me that was his uncle.

Tom: His dad is the only one of the boys left. There were four boys and three passed on. Boots was one of them—he lost his arm at the paper mill. His real name was Roy, but his nickname was Boots. They all had nicknames, I guess.

Laughter

Carol: So, when your parents divorced, you said you were young?

Tom: Two or three. Mom remarried when I was about five. She married Esworthy.

Carol: Oh, I know the name.

Tom: We've got some Esworthy's in the township.

Allie: Did you grow up going to the mill?

Tom: No, it was closed by the time I had any recollection. I guess it was closed right after the war, or shortly after. I was born in 1937, so I was maybe eight or ten. I don't remember anything.

Carol: I don't recall it being in operation.

Allie: You mentioned the Air Force. Can you tell us a little bit about that history?

Tom: Well, I joined right out of high school. A year later, when my wife graduated, we got married at the Air Force base, and I spent four years active in the Air Force. I've got two grandchildren in there now. I had breakfast with them the other day. One of them is stationed in Nevada but is in California at the moment. The other is in Virginia, at Langley, but he's leaving two weeks from today for Korea. Korea for a year.

Carol: You said you knew Frank? Did you mean my brother, or my father?

Tom: Father.

Carol: My brother, Frank, would have been a little older than you. He passed away. My sister is the same age.

Tom: Oh, okay. Yeah, your father owned the store. We used to go in every once in a while. The post office was there too. Is there still a post office there?

Carol: I think, but I'm not sure.

Tom: I'd have thought they consolidated it.

Carol: I know they changed it from a store to apartments.

Tom: There were gas pumps. You used to be able to pump your gas there.

Carol: We pumped gas. My sister was saying that as girls, we pumped gas, which most girls wouldn't have done then. We had them at the store, so we did.

Tom: Have you been in the new store, Crop's? Up over the cash register is the big picture.

Allie: We just talked about that, but I haven't seen it yet.

Tom: I'm in the one on the left.

Allie: Are you?

Tom: I was in high school. I had an apron on, I was a stock boy. Part-time after school.

Cynette: Did you know Larry Schmidt? He started bagging there.

Tom: Larry Schmidt? Right here where the tombstone place is now?

Cynette: He started bagging there when he was probably sixteen. He became a manager of the Cropper's.

Tom: Oh, yeah?

Cynette: He ended up staying there all of his life. He passed away a couple of years ago.

Tom: Oh, Larry! I knew him! My wife knew him real well, though I don't know how she knew him.

Cynette: Probably from the store. If she went when it was the store. Everybody knew Larry.

Tom: Probably. I didn't know him when he was younger, but I remember him when he was the manager.

Carol: You mentioned Finger. We interviewed Ross Mowery, and he had some neat pictures and Finger was in them. They were related somehow.

Tom: Were they? I was talking to George Buller. You know George Buller?

Allie: He (Ross) mentioned being good friends with them.

Tom: Well, Penrose was killed in an accident and died. His widow lived next door to me.

Carol: So, where did you go to school?

Tom: Downingtown. I was in the Air Force, but I graduated from Downingtown High School. I went to Thorndale for a while, I guess first grade to maybe fourth or fifth, and then moved into Downingtown.

Allie: What school in Thorndale?

Tom: Caln Consolidated. Right along the highway.

Allie: See, we haven't heard this yet, so that's new!

Tom: Oh, okay. Yeah, that's the grade school.

Cynette: That's an old building. My son went there.

Tom: Jean Pollock, you know the Pollocks?

Carol: Yes.

Tom: She was the principal there, when I was going to school. Henry Pollock, the veterinarian? He was her nephew, and he was in my class all the way from first grade till we graduated.

Carol: When you moved to this area, did you go to high school here?

Tom: Downingtown.

Allie: What year did you graduate?

Tom: '55.

Allie: Was that the year Joan Stanford graduated?

Carol: And Elsie.

Tom: I think they were '56.

Carol: Joan Miley, we interviewed her.

Tom: The anniversary party that I went to yesterday, there were three or four from that class and then three or four from my class.

Carol: Oh, how about that!

Tom: The woman that the anniversary party was for was in my wife's class. Ginny Pierce.

Carol: I went to school with Fred Miley, and that was Joan's younger brother.

Allie: Ginny Pierce, was she local?

Carol: I don't know. I only know her name because she was a friend of my sisters.

Allie: My grandma had a really good friend named Ginny, and I forgot all about it until I heard that name. That's interesting.

Carol: I think there's a few of her classmates that have come to visit her at Hickory House (Elsie).

Allie: Could you talk me through your childhood a little bit? Was it very agricultural here when you were young?

Tom: Oh yeah.

Allie: Did your family have any of that?

Tom: My grandparents lived right in Downingtown, and there was a big flood in Downingtown. In '41, I think.

Carol: We just saw some pictures of that.

Tom: I just threw a bunch of pictures away.

Allie: Wow.

Tom: There was a school bus, but it took guys to work at the mills. It got stranded right on Brandywine Avenue. Water was up to the windshield on the school bus. That was right in front of my grandparents' house.

Allie: Oh my gosh. Wow.

Tom: Water was in the street, and then a step up to the sidewalk. Then, another step up to the landing, and three steps up the front porch, another step going into the house. The water was a step going upstairs.

Allie: Oh my gosh.

Carol: Now, where was your grandparents house?

Tom: 115 Brandywine Avenue (Downingtown). Across from the movie theatre (old).

Carol: By Wagner's store and the Roosevelt Theatre.

Tom: Yeah. On the same side as the store, but closer to the movie theatre. Yep. We lived there for a while. We lived in Thorndale. We moved quite a bit. Then, we moved down to Downingtown again.

Carol: Your mom was a single mom?

Tom: She married Walt Esworthy.

Allie: What did he do?

Tom: He worked for Leiman's. B.M. Leiman's. I think Chemical Leaman's is what they finally changed their name to. My biological dad drove trucks for Leiman's.

Allie: So they crossed paths now and then? Did they have an alright relationship?

Tom: Yeah, fine! It may have even been how my mom met my stepdad. Who knows!

Laughter

Allie: Did your dad remarry?

Tom: That's a funny story too. My mom was Methodist, and my dad was Catholic. The Catholic church considered me illegitimate, I guess. When my mom got divorced, Dad got remarried too and he had two more kids. I'm still in contact with one. He lives in New York state. Then, they divorced, and Dad got with another gal. The one he'd been married to was Catholic, and the church wouldn't let him divorce. So, he lived with this other gal for years. Finally, the second one died and the following week he got married. He's gone now, and she's my stepmother, I guess? She's in a nursing home in New York. They come visit and we go visit. It's all friendly. The last couple times we went up, she didn't know us. I told her, 'I'm Tom McKeever.' She said, 'No, I was married to Tom McKeever.'

Carol: I was telling Allie about when Kennedy was running for President and people were afraid because he was Catholic.

Allie: That was so surprising.

Carol: People were afraid that the Pope was going to rule the United States.

Allie: It's incredible. We were saying what a drastic change it is now, because you rarely even hear a speech that doesn't mention them thanking God. It's interesting to see the dynamic and shift.

Carol: As you can hear from what Tom even said about his dad not being able to get remarried. The Catholic church was far stricter than it is today. I was saying how friends of mine that were Catholic—I went to Hopewell Methodist—and they couldn't come to the church.

Tom: When I was a kid—we were Methodist and then changed to Baptist for a while—I had a friend as a kid and he was Catholic. They were fairly active in it all, and the church was a Methodist church in Downingtown, and they had some kind of youth thing that I was going to because it sounded fun and interesting. So, I asked this buddy of mine if he wanted to come with me. He said he wasn't supposed to go anywhere but the Catholic church. He asked his mom, and she told him it wouldn't hurt. He went with me a couple of times, but then I guess somebody found out about it and they gave him a hard time.

Cynette: Here you are, willing to go to church as a young kid, and you're yelled at not to go.

Tom: Yeah.

Carol: It was stricter, that's for sure. There was a greater fear of the power of the church too.

Allie: Sounds that way. What did you do for fun as a kid? We've heard a lot about bike riding.

Tom: Bike riding, yeah.

Laughter

Tom: We'd go swimming and sledding.

Allie: Did you swim anywhere specific?

Tom: Creeks. Beaver Creek, behind Lloyd Avenue. In Thorndale, there was a creek down there behind the school. When we moved to Downingtown, there was a YMCA Camp, Camp Hilltop. Have you heard of that?

Cynette: I think it's gone now.

Tom: Yeah, I think it's gone. You know the high bridge when you're leaving Downingtown going towards West Chester?

Allie: Yes.

Tom: Well, it can also take you to Johnstown. As soon as you turn left again and it winds up the hill, at the very top of the hill there was a camp and it had a swimming pool. You could get a membership.

Cynette: St. Joe's Cemetery is up there too.

Tom: We went up there a lot (the pool). They sold it and built homes or whatever. When I lived up on Highspire Road, I worked at Colonial Bakeshop in Downingtown. I would bicycle down from Highspire Road.

Carol: Did you tell me where you lived on Highspire?

Tom: Right past the school buses.

Carol: All the way up?

Tom: Yeah, up 322 and going through that crazy intersection. Turn left, and there was a farm right there.

Carol: Furlong's lived on the corner?

Cynette: Davidson's.

Tom: Patterson? This was fifty or sixty years ago. There were people who lived at the farm, and you'd go in the same drive and there was a tenant house or something.

Cynette: I know Jane Davidson is a historical person, and she's been around. She lived right in that intersection.

Tom: This guy was some kind of a Quaker missionary that lived in the farm. I think it started with a 'P'.

Carol: I know that Piersol's lived up there.

Cynette: Going up towards the recreational barn.

Tom: Springton Manor?

Cynette: Yeah, Norman Piersol lived up there.

Tom: Insurance guy? I knew him.

Cynette: You know that Vivian is still around?

Tom: Oh, really?

Carol: I heard she's one hundred now. Nice person.

Cynette: She was friends with my grandparents.

Tom: We had a gal at this anniversary party yesterday who was one hundred or one hundred and two or something. She was there sitting at the table with everybody else.

Allie: Can you imagine?

Laughter

Carol: As long as you're healthy enough to do that, you're okay. Most people aren't in as good shape.

Tom: Her daughter was in my class and was there too. She's got a daughter that's eighty years old! I'm eighty-one, so her daughter must be around that. Here she was with her mother there.

Carol: My gosh, that's really something. Good for her that she's in good enough shape.

Tom: She knew my dad, somehow or other. This guy that was having the party, his dad was friends with my dad. They all must have somehow been some kind of distant cousins.

Carol: Did he work at Chemical Leaman's too?

Laughter

Tom: Maybe Pillsbury?

Allie: Pillsbury being here was new for us. We found out that was here pretty recently. We knew about Pepperidge, but not Pillsbury.

Tom: Oh, really? Budd, B-U-D-D? In Eagle there was Gindy manufacturing. They were on Boot Road.

Carol: We were just talking about Gindy.

Allie: Someone who was just here, Steve Sarmento, his father worked for them.

Tom: When I got out of the Air Force I worked there. For a couple of weeks, they went on strike, and I wasn't there long enough to get in the Union yet.

Cynette: Didn't Steve say that they shut down?

Tom: Yeah, they went on strike.

Allie: He said there was a fire. In Downingtown there was a fire. But not in Eagle.

Carol: Now, the Korean War? That wasn't going on when you were in the Air Force, was it?

Tom: That was when I was still in high school. I was what they call a "Cold War Veteran," between Korea and Vietnam. I was in the Strategic Aircraft, transporting the bombs. We weren't dropping it on anybody. Four years, when we were actually in the declared war.

Carol: Bay of Pigs?

Tom: Actually, after I got out, I got a notice to pack my bags and get ready to go. A couple of days later, they cancelled it.

Carol: Kennedy was President. There was the threat.

Tom: Yeah. I lucked out.

Carol: What did you do after the Air Force?

Tom: I came back here, and I got a job. I was an aircraft mechanic in the Air Force. The only jobs for anything like that would have made me go to Philadelphia, and I didn't want to do that. I got a job with Hoskin's Ford as a car mechanic for a little while. I'd be there during the day and then Gindy's at night to try to scrape together enough money to buy a house. Then, I got a job with a Producer's Co-Op in Coatesville. I was a poultry processor for live chickens. The whole process, until they were packed in ice and ready to go to the store.

Allie: Wow.

Tom: They also did eggs. They bought eggs from anyone who had chickens around there, and then they graded them and packaged them for the stores. I was maintenance, running conveyor belts and refrigeration. It was pretty interesting, and I learned to do a lot of stuff other than working on an aircraft. We did everything. We made our own ice in big machines with water running down the sides and a scraper would create crushed ice.

Carol: Where was that located?

Tom: The east end of Coatesville, near the Chevy dealer. Between that and the railroad.

Carol: Oh, near the railroad for shipping!

Tom: Yeah. I was there for a year or so, because they closed up. Then I worked for Faddis. I worked there for about fourteen years. I was a manager there.

Allie: Is that right off of 340? My parents live near there.

Cynette: Young son, Kevin Faddis?

Tom: He had three girls and one boy. His boy's name was Dennis, and he married a local girl. They live over off of Thorndale-Marshallton Road in Victoria's Crossing. He must be in his sixties.

Carol: As we get older, it seems younger.

Laughter

Tom: He's got a sister that married a Mendenhall. Leona Mendenhall? Seen the signs? That's his oldest daughter, June. They lived right behind the drugstore in the house that burnt down. That was the middle daughter. Jeanette was the youngest. I think she's down in the Carolina's or something. She used to sing with a few other girls, they called themselves the Singing Bee's. They made and sold records. A long time ago.

Carol: After you got married, you lived on Hopewell Road?

Tom: Well, we got married when I was in the Air Force. When I got out, we came back here. We bought a piece of ground from Popjoy and built a house there. Been there ever since.

Allie: Did you get married on the Air Force base?

Tom: Yeah, base Chapel—Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. Bossier Parish, Louisiana.

Allie: She went with you?

Tom: She came down. She graduated a year after I did. I was already there. When she graduated, my mother and grandmother and her came down on the train. We got married on the base there. Could have got out of it! We got off-schedule with the church and the chaplain was scheduled to marry us and he didn't show up. He lived on the base too. I drove over to his house, knocked on the

door and all that. His daughter came to the door, and I asked if he was there. She said, “Yeah, just a minute,” and then yelled, “Daddy, there’s somebody here to see you!”

Allie: The groom!

Tom: He came into the living room in Bermuda shorts and saw me and remembered. His wife had fallen and had an accident—she broke her ankle—so he’d taken her to the hospital and forgot all about the wedding. He told me to go back to the chapel and that he’d be right there. I don’t know how he did it, but he got there faster than I did. In full uniform!

Allie: How was Louisiana?

Tom: It’s hot and humid. How East Brandywine was last week.

Laughter

Allie: Did you see the bayou? The alligators and swamp?

Tom: Oh yeah. What’s interesting is they don’t have it—or didn’t anyway—broken up into counties like we do. There, it’s parishes. Like church.

Carol: Probably the parishes of the church and just kept the names.

Tom: Could be. A lot of French-Canadians settled there. A buddy of mine from Louisiana—before I got married—he was in the same parish as I was. He was French-Canadian, and his name was Bobby LeDurn. When he got out, he bought a Mexican restaurant. And he’s French!

Laughter

Tom: Still has it. I guess his kids have taken it over. It’s interesting.

Allie: You can get your enchiladas and your poutine. Now, did we ask what your background is?

Tom: Irish. My grandparents came over from Ireland, on my father's side. My grandfather and his wife came over. I forget how many kids. She got sick and a couple of the kids got sick, and they died of whatever it was. My grandfather went back to Ireland and married her sister. Her sister was my grandmother.

Allie: How about that. How about your mom's parents?

Tom: I think Irish. Her name was March, just like the month. My grandfather was named after a general in the Civil War. His dad was friends with the general's dad, or something like that. We don't know too much more. They're scattered all over the place now. At the anniversary party I went to yesterday, there were a lot of March's there. The fella who the party was for, his mother was a March. His mother and mine were cousins. He and I are second cousins.

Allie: Wow.

Tom: My grandmother, Grandma March, I think she was German. Her name was Eimer. She had three sisters, and they were raised in foster homes. I don't know what happened. I met two of them, but they are all gone now. One of them was an opera singer. The other two were ordinary people. She was probably a little German. My grandmother and grandfather on my dad's side though, both Irish. I've got a copy of my grandfather's birth certificate.

Carol: What part? North?

Tom: Yeah, North.

Carol: Protestant, or Catholic?

Tom: They were Catholic.

Carol: The North tended to be Protestant. And “Mc” usually was Catholic. I’m not sure about that. My ancestors, there was no “Mc” and they were Protestant.

Tom: My great-grandfather, his name was Neil McKeever. When I was born, my dad—I don’t know if he’d had a little too much to drink—and they filled out the birth certificate and wanted to know the name. He told them to put Thomas Neil McKeever, and they said Neil isn’t a biblical name. The hospital made it Cornelius. So, that’s my middle name now.

Laughter

Tom: Instead of Thomas Neil, I’m Thomas Cornelius. With my son, we changed his middle name so that he wouldn’t be Thomas Cornelius too.

Allie: Oh my gosh! Now, how many kids do you have?

Tom: That’s another story. I had two, a son and a daughter. They both passed away. My daughter died when she was forty-two, at Johns Hopkins Hospital. My son just died five years ago, he was fifty-five. He has two of my grandkids who are still around. My daughter wasn’t taking care of herself and there was diabetes in the family, and we don’t know if she had it or not. But she got sick and they took her to John Hopkins Hospital and she died. One of the things was that her blood-oxygen level was way low, lower than it should be. They couldn’t keep her alive. My son got that flesh eating disease. He didn’t know where he got it from. It gets into your blood and could be there for years. He was at a farm show in Harrisburg on an escalator, and somebody above him fell. It was like dominos. He was a big guy—bigger than me—and he got knocked down and didn’t break anything but maybe a scratch. Shortly after that, he got sick and was put in the hospital. It was in his left leg and arm, and they had to go in with pumps to get rid of the poison and antibiotics.

Cynette: I had that in my back, a vacuum pump.

Tom: He went through all that and got pretty much over it and back to work. He was married then and had two kids. He was in the hospital two or three different times. One of the times, he fell over his dog and cracked his head. His wife was working, and the kids were in school, so he came to stay with us. A month at our place. He went home and back to work, and I guess it was under a year, he got put into the hospital. There was retaining fluid. They airlifted him from Jennersville Hospital to Philadelphia, and had to get rid of the fluid. Came home again, went back to work. Six months later or so, he went to Jennersville again. We went down to see him at the hospital, and they said to just visit at the house when he came home. That was Saturday at the hospital, and Monday morning when they went around to check him, he had died overnight. Weakened his heart. So, that was that.

Allie: I'm sorry. You said that you had two grandchildren?

Tom: Three. My daughter had a girl, and she's the oldest. She's got two kids—two girls. My great-grandchildren. My son's two kids are the ones that are in the military.

Allie: Were they here for a visit? You mentioned you'd had breakfast with them, and I imagine that you weren't just in California.

Laughter

Tom: Yeah! My grandson flew in from Nevada, and my granddaughter drove from Virginia. We met in West Chester. Their mother came too, my daughter-in-law. We had a nice visit. My grandson flew back that afternoon! My granddaughter, she's leaving two weeks from today to go to Korea. They are both officers.

Carol: I noticed that you're wearing a Masonic ring. So, I'm assuming you were a part of the Masonic Lodge in Downingtown?

Tom: West Chester. I was working in West Chester, so I joined West Chester. I visited Downingtown.

In fact, I went to Honey Brook a couple of weeks ago. You visit other ones. I was thinking about joining Honey Brook because the one in West Chester has twenty-two steps up from the ground floor up to the next floor where the meeting is.

Cynette: Is Downingtown still around?

Carol: I had a party there. I went back to school, and when I graduated, we had a little party there, at the Masonic Lodge. It's reasonably priced.

Allie: Is that the one right off of 322? When I was in school, a couple of kids had sweet sixteen parties there.

Carol: My dad was in the Tall Cedars of Lebanon.

Tom: I was in that too.

Carol: Coatesville? Dad was in the one in Coatesville.

Tom: West Chester. We'd go to a convention in Wildwood, or somewhere down there.

Carol: I don't remember him doing a whole lot of it later. We've talked a couple times doing these, about how important the social organizations were. Whether it was church, or the Mason's or Grange.

Tom: To be in the Cedars, one of the requirements was that you had to be a Mason in order to join.

Carol: Is that how that worked? I had no idea.

Tom: If you were a Cedar, you were automatically a Mason. It was a requirement.

Carol: How were the Cedar's different?

Tom: It was more social and more family oriented. In the Mason's, there's no women. It's all men.

Carol: I didn't know that.

Tom: Usually Mason's wives meet separately.

Allie: How did you get involved?

Tom: A friend of mine talked me into it. He was already in it. That's the other way you can get in. You have to be asked.

Allie: Oh, so it's invitation only?

Tom: No, you have to ask. They can't ask you if you want to join.

Carol: There's a lot of rituals and stuff.

Tom: They can't try to recruit you though.

Carol: So, the Downingtown Masonic Lodge wasn't always there on 322? It was somewhere else, right?

Tom: Yeah, but I don't remember where.

Carol: It seems to me that the Lodge in Downingtown wasn't there. Do you remember the Roosevelt Theater?

Tom: Oh, yeah. I used to go there every Saturday. There was a matinee on Saturday afternoons.

Carol: And the Swan Hotel?

Tom: And the Flying A? The gas station that was connected to that?

Carol: Sinclair. Then, there was the Flying A that was a part of the name. My dad's gas in Lyndell was Sinclair, and what they did was take the word Sinclair, and then in the middle where the 'a' was

they put wings on it or something and it became the Flying A. Sort of their trademark. I don't think it was ever big. I was reading the other day about the start of some of the grocery stores. There was an A&P in Downingtown.

Tom: Where the police station is now. The old building by the bridge and the Brandywine—that was the old police station and post office. Downtown, about a block or so, there was something that I think was a bank at one time. When I was a kid, it had a produce market in its basement. Lots of barber shops in town too. Now there's only two or three I think. Miller's and Blackie's...

Allie: Someone was just telling us that there used to be one next door to Mama Lena's too?

Tom: Jack Williams. He lived on Dilworth Road.

Carol: Jack Williams! We were trying to remember his name.

Tom: I went to him a bunch of times. He was always joking around. I remember going in there one day, and I was sitting in the chair while he was cutting my hair, and he asked me if I had been bleeding when I walked in. He said, "You are now!"

Laughter

Carol: Was he cantankerous?

Tom: If he didn't know you, maybe. We were good friends.

Allie: I think he used to operate as he got older, out of his house. I was there before, along for the ride, and he was friendly from what I remember.

Tom: Oh, yeah. If you were in the hospital, he'd come around to the hospital and give you a haircut.

Carol: We might want to interview him.

Allie: Yeah. I remember going in there, and he had hats all along the wall. Up on the top, on hooks or a ledge or something.

Carol: Do you remember the Downingtown Industrial School? It was a school before it became Delaware Community College.

Tom: Yeah.

Allie: Do you remember any of your old teachers?

Tom: Oh! Revitz. Mike Revitz. He lived up here at the corner of 322 and 82. He and his wife both. Both were teachers. She was an art teacher, and he was science or something. And Casky. Howard Casky. He was a football coach and a teacher. His dad worked for Bob Cropper.

Allie: Did you play sports?

Tom: Not really. I played, but not on a team. Had to get out of school and go to work.

Carol: Was Casky a big guy? He taught Problems of Democracy, and I loved him. He would really encourage you to have an opinion and back it up. You'd have to have researched it a bit.

Tom: Yeah, and I also had Miss Hall. Miss Hurlock.

Carol: Miss Laird? Was she there?

Cynette: She was my neighbor.

Tom: Miss Laird, yeah. Remember her? She lived down next to the school for a while. Maybe it wasn't her. There were Laird's here in Guthriesville, but I don't think she was related to them. She lived right next to the school, her and two or three other teachers, I think.

Cynette: I know who you're talking about now. I'm talking about Hazel Laird.

Carol: Oh, no. That's not the same.

Tom: Bill Laird. Alan McCausland. He was something in the township for a while.

Cynette: Bill had the farm where there's a big development now. I had horses back there. Did you know Walt Crandall? He helped me with my horse.

Tom: Oh, yeah.

Carol: That's the one that's next to Brandywine Country Living (now Buddhist Temple), in the brick house. How did he lose his arm? World War II?

Tom: I don't know.

Allie: I know that you mentioned that you brought some things. Could we see? And how did you get hold of this?

Tom: My mom passed away years ago, and I'm an only child so I inherited it all. This was the Bondsville-Fisherville reunion.

Carol: I think Jim Buczala had this. One of the reunions. I think it was Jim.

Allie: So, this would have been at the church? I see the graveyard.

Tom: At the old East Brandywine Baptist, yeah. The original church isn't there now.

Allie: What year is this? 'Potentially '55.'

Tom: That's the church too. They added on. A parochial school or something. Do you remember Myrtle Jeffries? On Little Washington Road?

Carol: I know the name. There were Jeffries that lived off of...when you went around the corner on Corner Ketch-Lyndell Road. I think it was Warren Jeffries? We used to go swimming there and ice skating. Her name could have been Myrtle, but I don't remember.

Tom: This one is my grandmother, and here is Myrtle Jeffries. That's related to the East Brandywine Baptist Church. Remember Dick Risbol? Back in the fifties.

Carol: We were members at Hopewell. Now, we did have a little program at East Brandywine Township. The Arter's did a program.

Tom: Joyce?

Carol: Her husband lived across the street?

Tom: Yeah, that's Joyce. She married Bob Arters, and he had a brother a year or two older, and he was in my class. They lived in that house at the corner of Osborne Road.

Carol: We're hoping that Locust Knoll—it's changed names.

Tom: The Manley Farm. Roger Manley, he was in my wife's class. He had an older brother, a younger brother—a bunch of them, too. I didn't know them really well.