

CATHERINE SILIPENA CRISTENO

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 29, 2022



HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of*
HAMMONTON

EST. 1960

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON ORAL HISTORY
CATHERINE SILIPENA CRISTENO

Date of Interview	Friday, April 29, 2022
Interviewer(s)	Janet Hasulak
Interviewee(s)	Catherine Silipena Cristeno
Others Present	Pat DiDomenico

Question: Hi, we're here with Catherine Silipena. Did I pronounce that correctly?

That's right.

Question: How old are you, Catherine?

Ninety-eight.

Question: When were you born? What is the actual date of your birth?

August the 9th, 1923.

Question: We're conducting an oral interview with Catherine so that we can preserve some of her memories. It is April 29, 2022. I'm going to fire a couple questions at you, just demographic things. Then, like I was saying earlier, if there's anything you want to interject and at any point, anything you would rather not answer, that's absolutely fine, too.

Yes. When you said Silipena, that's my maiden name that's not my name now, it's Cristeno.

Question: How do you spell that?

C-r-i-s-t-e-n-o.

Question: So, Silipena is your maiden name. Where were you actually born?

Nesco, Pleasant Mills Road, Nesco.

Question: In a home or in a hospital?

In the home, a two-room house. My father was building it when I was born and there were only two rooms.

Question: Did you grow up in that town after you were born there?

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Yes, until I got a job and moved out.

Question: Did you ever live in any other states or any other towns?

In Pennsylvania, I did. I lived with an aunt and uncle, but I worked in Philadelphia.

Question: How old were you then?

Probably 18 going on 19, I think.

Question: So that was when you went off on your own, so to speak, to work and it was all after high school?

Well, before that I went to Atlantic City and lived with a sister. We lived in a rooming house, and I worked in a luncheonette, but that was just getting my roots, you know. I had just left home.

Question: You were off on your own.

Yes, pretty much, pretty much.

Question: What were your surroundings like as a child? You said you were raised in Nesco and born in that home. Can you describe what you remember of your girlhood home?

Well, we ended up with nine children; we were kind of crowded because there were only six rooms. Every two years it seemed like my mother had a baby. It was a little crowded. Then we had two uncles that came to live with us during the Depression. They lost their jobs and their house, and they came to live with us. Then toward the very end, after I had moved out, they took my grandmother in. Of course, my grandpa had died, and they brought her to the house. She was blind, so then my mother took care of her until she passed away. She was 101 when she passed away.

Question: You've got great genes. No wonder you have the longevity that you've experienced, that's awesome. What do you remember of school?

Well, it was a two-room school. The first room had from 1st grade to 4th and the second one had from 5th to 8th. We didn't have Kindergarten, so we went right into 1st grade when five years. That's why I was only 16 when I graduated high school.

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Question: That was young.

I was 17 a few months later when my birthday fell, but we were only five years old when we started. It was a long walk to school. I would say it was almost a mile.

Question: Did you always walk in all kinds of weather?

If the weather was too bad, my father probably didn't work, and he took us. For a short time, I don't remember a lot about it, the teacher that taught from 1st to 8th lived in Hammonton and he stopped and picked us up if the weather was real bad. But he had an accident and he passed away. I just barely remember him because one episode, my sister was a clown and she was clowning around at home, we were waiting for him to pick us up, and she put four hats on her head. Somebody hollered, "Mr. Sheilly's [phonetic] here" and we all ran out because my mother said, "Don't make Mr. Sheilly wait." She went to school with the four hats on and we didn't tell her until we all laughed so much, she realized what it was.

Question: She didn't do it purposely.

Oh no, she was just clowning around. They were just mitt hats. Mr. Sheilly never said a word. I guess he just smiled and said they're just kids clowning around. That's the only thing I remember about Mr. Sheilly because right after that he passed away.

Question: Do you remember the names of some of your other teachers?

Mrs. Taver [phonetic] was the first teacher that I had.

Question: What grade would that have been? When you started in 1st?

No 1st grade I had Hilda Stork [Phonetic] and then she was Hilda Frame [Phonetic].

Question: She got married.

Yes. But that was later after I got out of school. In fact, the school now is The Mullica Township Historical Society School. They call it the "Hilda Frame School."

Question: What was it named while you were in attendance?

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We just said Nesco School, that's all we ever called it. Hilda, Ms. Stork, she got married to the neighbor across the street from us. My sister Bert, (that was before cell phones,) used to take notes from the teacher to the man across the street. Then they eventually married but that was much later.

Question: Who were your best friends when you were a girl?

Kay Neal [Phonetic].

Question: Did she live close to you?

Not too far. She didn't go to – yes, she did go to our school, she went to Grammar School with us. I used to walk to her house, and she'd walk back to ours when we had time.

Question: You were close enough that you could play after school, that sort of thing?

Not that close. I would say it was maybe a half-a-mile away or something like that. But that was nothing to us when we were kids, we walked all the time, every place we went, we walked.

Question: What were your favorite pastimes?

Mine was reading, yes. We had a small library at the school. It wasn't really a library; I think Hilda Stork must have gone to the library at different times and brought books back, and I was always reading.

Question: You were talking about your girlfriend about going to...?

That was her sister.

Question: When you used to go to Batsto, and the keeper let you go in.

Kay Neal never went there; it was Bert and the Gato kids. We rode our bikes back to Batsto.

Question: Tell us more about that.

I can't believe it but it's before it was a State, it was just the Wharton's, or I forget who it was, and they had a caretaker and the woman lived in the mansion. They always had horses and some animals, and he took care of the outside. She was

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always in the kitchen when we went there. She let us in, and she had a parrot right at the door, it was a Dutch door. She'd give us a cracker and we'd say, "Polly wants a cracker," and Polly would want a cracker. From what I understand, he's been stuffed and he's in the library down there now. She let us run through that mansion, we never touched a thing, believe it or not. Now they have plexiglass, so you can't even go in the rooms. We used to go in and one room in particular had a Bible with old-fashioned glasses, we were positive that was George Washington's.

Question: That was the rumor with the children.

Of course, they told us that he stopped there one time on his way to Trenton, it probably wasn't, but we liked to think it was.

Question: She seemed to welcome the children being there, you had a great time.

Yes. She had no problem with us being there and going through. In later years, it's been quite a while now, I was a member of whatever they called it down there, but I don't know why, I just quit my membership. They used to invite us to a tea every Christmas, the members.

Question: Very nice.

Yes, it was nice.

Question: Tell us about the fire tower.

After we left the mansion, there was a dirt road and it was really dirt, we couldn't ride our bikes, you had to push some, there was a fire tower back in there. We used to climb the fire tower and the Ranger up there was glad to see us. He would explain to us how they would pinpoint where the fire is. He had strings on a map, and he'd say, "Well, this guy calls and it's here. And this one calls, it's here." And where they met, that's where the fire was. We'd climb down, push our bikes back. Right when you go into Batsto itself, there was an outside pump, it was over a well.

Question: Were you allowed to play in that water?

No. It was just drinking water. It was an old-fashioned pump, and it had a ladle there hanging. We all drank from that ladle. And everybody that would pass, I

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guess, they had their horses, they'd stop, and they'd drink, everybody used that ladle.

Question: A community ladle.

We didn't think anything of it.

Question: Pre-COVID.

But the water was ice cold that you pumped out and we put the ladle back again and ride our bikes back home. That was our entertainment.

When you got a little older, when you got to be a teenager, what was the thing to do when you got to be a teenager? How did you spend your time?

Probably taking care of the little kids in the family.

Question: Watching the younger. Where were you now? You said you were one of how many?

Nine.

Question: Nine. Where were you in the line?

I'm the third from the top.

Question: You were one of the older or were you the oldest daughter?

No. There were two older ones.

Question: Three girls?

Yes. I did a lot of changing diapers.

Question: I bet you did.

After all, my mother was busy cooking for all of us and washing.

Question: That was just how things were done back then.

It was, yes. She didn't have a washing machine. She had one of these big, galvanized tubs with the washboard, yes.

Question: How did they deal with all those diapers?

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I don't know.

Question: Just out of curiosity.

I have no idea. I guess, well, they must have been on the line outside. I don't know.

Question: You just spent a lot of time doing laundry for that many people.

I guess. Well, you didn't change your clothes every day, back in those days. You wore them till you had to, practically, yes. But we didn't have a lot of clothes either, you know.

Question: Just out of curiosity, with that many children, what was it like on the bath day? How did you guys go about doing that?

I can remember very vaguely in the middle of the kitchen floor was this galvanized tub. My mother washing one at a time, and my father drying us. I guess it was bedtime. He put our pajamas on us or something. I just barely remember that because sometimes it was cold, and by the time you got to be dried, by then the towel was wet, too.

Question: I bet your biggest concern was just getting in your own pajamas and getting under the covers.

Yes.

Question: How did the girls dress back then?

Well, dresses. We never wore pants. Always dresses, yes.

Question: What was the hemline length?

Well, it was a little below your knee, just by the kneecap, right below it.

Question: Was that stressed? Was it important to have your hemline at a certain point for that?

Well, little kids, I don't remember. I guess we just wore whatever we had. It wasn't until after the war that they had the longer dresses. Before the war, to conserve material, your dresses were at your knee or a little above.

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Question: Tell them what you did during the war.

I worked in the war plant, in the Navy yard.

Question: Were you a single lady at that point or had you already been married?

I was only 19.

Question: And what did you do there?

Well, when I applied, I thought I was going in the office because that's what I wanted to do. In school I had taken bookkeeping and shorthand and things like that. But they put me in a department that had - the machine was called a brink, where you put the flange on a piece of material. I wasn't in there too long. They then put me in another shop. I guess they were shorthanded. At that time, it was mostly women on airplanes. This wasn't ships, this was airplanes .

Question: So you were helping with the manufacturing of all these airplanes, for the war effort.

Yes. I was a riveter. You took your turn riveting and bucking the planes because it has no air conditioning, just these huge fans. The people inside the plane that's bucking the rivet, it gets very, very hot, so you had to take turns.

Question: It's tough to stay inside it for long, I imagine, with the heat.

I was inside the plane a lot because I was skinny in those days. I only weighed about a hundred pounds. To get into some of the smaller places, I had to do that. That was your job. In fact, some of the small places they had, we called them - what did we call them? Now they call them little people, midgets. We call them midgets back then. Now they just call them little people.

Question: Yes. I think that's the politically correct term.

Yes. For the real tough places, like in the nose and things like that, you would have to.

Question: They would have the midgets crawl in there, and do the work in there? Oh, my goodness. Did they use the term "Rosie the Riveter" back then?

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No. No. Somebody came up with that to make money or something because I thought it was always ridiculous. It was a job. Everybody did their job. There was nothing to it. They made a big thing. In fact, they tried to make even a medal for Rosie the Riveters, but I think that it was a job. We did our job and that was it.

Question: Was it done with the attitude of doing something for the war effort? Or was it just that you wanted your paycheck Friday, and you were young, and you wanted to have gas money or whatever?

Well, it was more that. Of course, we had friends in the war, so that made a difference, too. When you're 19 years old, you have a lot of different interests. We had a lot of friends. In fact, one of the boys from Hammonton here, Sam Alazo [phonetic], he was killed in Africa in the war.

Question: Were there many men that you knew that were maybe schoolmates with you, that did go off to the war? Not that you necessarily lost but who were fighting.

There was, but I didn't keep in touch with a lot that I went to high school with because we went there with the bus. A lot of the people that came from in the bus, like Elwood. In fact, the people from Waterford came on the train. We didn't get too chummy with people there. If I participated in anything after school, I had to stay and live with my grandmother and grandfather. They lived on Broadway in Hammonton, and I would have to walk to their house, which was only about 20, 25 minutes and after to stay all night.

Question: I see. Which high school did you attend?

Hammonton.

Question: The public school? Hammonton Public School?

Now it's the Catholic St. Joe's, is it now?

Question: It was that building right there?

Yes.

Question: And when did you marry?

1945.

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Question: How old were you at that age then?

Well, I guess I was almost 23.

Question: Did you have a church wedding?

No. No. He had just come home from the war, and we just had a regular wedding.

Question: Where had he been stationed?

Well, he was in Coral Gables. He didn't serve in the whole war; he was an only child. Back in that day, because of the five Sullivan brothers that were on the ship, USS Juneau.

Question: I remember that.

They weren't drafting only children. And when they did draft them, they didn't have to go into battle because of that. We weren't engaged or anything during that time. It wasn't until after he came from the war.

Question: What was his name? How did you meet?

Well, that's a funny story.

Question: We want to hear it?

I always said I won him in a poker game.

Question: You were the lucky one.

Well, we had a paycheck every two weeks at the Navy yard, and the last five letters, they played poker. Well, I didn't know anything about it. When they came around collecting, I put my money in, but I didn't know how to play poker. It was about five minutes before quitting time. My boss said to me, "Let me see your check." He said, "Oh, this looks like a winner. Go take it over." Up until that time, my husband, who I didn't know at that time, was the winner. He was so mad because he thought somebody deliberately waited till quitting time to say they were the winner. He wanted to know who it was. So, he came over, somebody told him who it was, and he took one look at me and he said, "Can I help you spend it?"

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Question: That sounds like an invitation.

Of course, it was "No." After that, every once in a while, - he was from another shop within the same building, but it was from another shop.

Question: So, he wasn't someone you would've run into otherwise?

No. No. I don't think I'd ever seen him before.

Question: See, this was meant to be.

Yes. One time, my Pat and I, we were at Camden County College, we were taking a course in the war. They were showing a video of Rosie the Riveters, they were older women, they were in her room. She said, I guess there's none of them left now. The speaker asked if anyone knew a "Rosie the Riveter" and Pat pointed at me. Then she asked if I would get up and talk. I said I'm not comfortable with that. Ask me questions and I'll answer them. That's what we did. And one of them said to me, I guess there were nothing but older men then, because all the young men were off to work.

Question: Was that true?

I said, "Oh, yes, there was. I married one."

Question: Then you were proof. You were proof.

Not that time, but eventually.

Question: I have to ask, the picture that they always depicted of Rosie the Riveter with the bandana around her head and the overalls, how did you actually dress?

You had to have - we called them sludes, it was a net, and it was fancy.

Question: You wanted to look good too?

Well, yes. And it was thicker, and it had ribbons at the top and things, because you had to cover your hair because of the drills.

Question: Yes, that could present a big hazard.

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It was safer. And we wore mostly coveralls, because they didn't want a lot of loose clothing and things like that.

Question: Because otherwise they could have girls coming in with frilly sleeves, and you never would know what could happen. I guess they, for safety reasons, had to have some sort of dress code.

You could've gotten away with just pants and a sweater or something, but just for convenience, we wore coveralls.

Question: I think I asked you this about when you were a grade schoolgirl, but when you were a teenager, how did the girls dress? If you were going out with your beau?

Well, everybody had the Saddle Oxfords and Bobby socks, that was it.

Question: That was really the in thing, to have the saddle shoes?

Yes, saddle shoes.

Question: Skirts and sweaters?

Well, yes, whatever you had.

Question: Always skirts though.

Yes.

Question: Did you have anything like gym at school when you were going to school? How would you dress if you were doing something athletic?

Well, we had a gym class that we always had a gym suit, you had to have.

Question: How would you describe that outfit?

Well, it was just a blue cotton.

Question: They kind of have a reputation of being horrendous looking. Most the girls usually were never very attractive. Did you like yours? You didn't mind yours?

No. It was - everybody looked alike.

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Question: Did you sew your own clothes at any point? Or did your mother sew your dresses when you were a younger child?

I think she might have when we were very young, but it didn't hold her. I didn't. I loved to sew, but I probably didn't have patterns or anything. Right after I got married, I did a lot of sewing. Yes. I made my own maternity outfits and things like that.

Question: How many children did you have?

Two.

Question: And their names?

Sandy here, and Pat's here someplace.

Question: What was your husband's first name?

Joseph.

Question: Joseph Cristeno. Where was he born?

I think he was born in Philadelphia. His parents came from Hazleton, but I think he was born in Philadelphia after they moved to Philadelphia.

Question: And do you have grandchildren?

Yes. I have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Now, I have five great grandchildren. We just have a new one.

Question: God bless you, that's exciting.

It sure is, she's smart as a whip.

Question: How old is she now?

Two.

Question: She's just a little thing, wow. Let's talk about your mother's side of the family, did you know your mother's side of the family very well?

Yes. My mother was very close to all her sisters. I think one, two, three - I think four of her sisters were nurses.

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Question: And what was your mother's name and her maiden name?

Weber.

Question: And her first name?

Helen.

Question: Helen Weber. And where was she born?

She was born in Philadelphia.

Question: So, from the area as well. She grew up in Philadelphia, did she?

Partly. I imagine she was about 14 or 15 before she moved to Green Bank.

Question: And were you raised around aunts and uncles and cousins?

We were a big family, yes. We were very close. My aunts were there. They were spread out, but they visited often. And even now you see one, you see them all. In fact, how many today are going to lunch?

Relative: I think 10 of us. Yes.

Question: Nice. You are a big family.

Relative: Her sister and her brother and their spouses.

Question: That's nice that you all still get together.

Oh, we do all the time.

Question: How many of you are left out of your nine siblings?

Three.

Question: You do see each other pretty frequently?

In fact, we're going to see them for lunch. I don't see them often because they're in Hammonton, and we don't get here that often, but we're in contact on the phone all the time.

Question: That's wonderful. What more can you tell me about your mother and maybe your brothers and sisters? Is there anything there? Any funny stories?

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Well, some stories I can't tell you.

Question: Yes, you can.

You think I could? My mother lived her religion. She didn't preach it or anything. She lived it. We went to church. There was a small white Methodist church, I guess, about half-a-mile from us and we had to go to church. One day, I don't know whether I ought to say this -

Relative: Tell the penny story.

All right. So, every Sunday my mother would give us each three pennies or four pennies, whatever to put in the collection. One year, my brother decided - he was two years younger than me - he's going to keep it and buy candy on the way to school. And, of course, we ratted on him right away. The next Sunday, my mother took him to church, and she gave him six pennies, and she made him tell the minister three were for this time and he spent the money from them before now. I don't think he ever did it again. If he did, he didn't tell us so we couldn't rat on him. My mother marched him to church.

Relative: And tell her the dance story.

Question: He learned a lesson.

The what?

Relative: The dance story, when Aunt Bert and Aunt Pauline went to the dance at the school.

Oh, God, they used to have dances at the little grade school. They had these big doors that opened up. The man across the street was a musician and he played there. My father used to say that I was too young to go, but Bert and Pauline weren't.

Question: Your older sisters?

The two older ones. And my father would say, you'd be home by 10:00 o'clock, and they say, "Yes, dad." And we never had locks on the door. I don't even think we had keys. He would put toys or something behind the door so that they would open it, and he would hear them come in. Our bedroom was on the first floor,

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and the low window opened right up to the porch. They would come home, knock on the window. I would open the window and let them in.

Question: That was your job. You were the conspirator, then?

Yes. The man across the street was the musician down at the school. He'd say, "I saw you climbing in that window." My father, I don't think he ever knew. We never told him. I guess they went and moved the stuff before they went to bed. It was kid stuff. We've never destroyed anything or things like that.

Question: Yes. By today's standards that was not so bad, but it kept life exciting for you. It still was an adventure.

Oh yes.

Question: That was a big adventure actually.

But it was fun, growing up. We made our own fun.

Question: Back to your mom, can you tell me anything more about her side of the family or maybe your grandparents? Did you know your grandparents?

Yes. My grandmother and grandfather lived in Hammonton. My father used to take us up once a week or so, and we would kind of clean the house. Not really clean, but we'd sweep the floors and things like that.

Question: This was to help them out a little bit?

Yes.

Question: What were their names?

Her name was Josephine and his was Anthony Silipena.

Question: Silipena.

Yes. I don't know. We just did what we had to do. I was just thinking of something.

Relative: The saltwater taffy?

Hmm?

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Relative: The saltwater taffy she kept in her -

Oh yes. My grandmother had relatives that had a store on the Boardwalk. I don't know whether the store sold the saltwater taffies or whether they just had them, I don't know whether that was their store. I thought the store they had, had Mr. Peanuts that used to stand outside dressed like a big peanut.

Question: I remember him, sure.

Yes, I think that was their store. And after we would clean the house, my grandmother would go in the bedroom and come out with two saltwater taffies, that was our pay. We appreciated it; we didn't expect to be paid.

Question: I sure wish I could get my grandchildren to clean house for me for a couple of candies. I don't know that that would fly.

When I stayed with them after school, that was a little scary.

Question: Why was that?

Because their house was old, very well-built, it was like a fortress. They only lived on the first floor, and I slept on the second floor.

Question: There were bedrooms on that second floor.

Yes, there was one bedroom and no electricity, so I had to take a candle up at night. There were no shades on the window, but didn't make any difference back then, all I had was a candle. It was a little scary, but I got through it.

Question: Is the house still there?

Pardon?

Question: It's on Broadway, correct?

Yes.

Question: Is the home still there?

No. My brother-in-law bought the property, and he rented it out for a couple times. But then the house really was old, it was well-built though, I was really disappointed. He gave it to the fire company to practice and they burned it down.

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Question: For drills. Interesting.

Yes, which we were a little sad about.

Question: I would imagine, yes. You had a lot of memories tied to that house.

Yes.

Question: Did the property stay in the family for very long?

No, the Woman's Club is on it now.

Question: That was part of the property.

At the corner, yes.

Question: Did your grandfather participate in World War I at all?

No. He came from Italy, he was in the Army over there. He was a butcher, I think. We found out he was a butcher in the Army, that's all I know. I think you have his papers and things.

Relative: I did. I'm going to give it to them because I made him a copy. Tell her about Grandpa Weber when you used to stay there because I love this story.

My grandfather. I was scared to death of him for no reason, absolutely no reason. I'm sure he was a nice man, he just looked rough.

Question: Is this the same gentleman that lived on Broadway? Or is this a different grandfather?

No. This was my mother's side of the family in Green Bank.

Question: What was his first name? So, his name was Weber.

Charlie Weber.

Question: Charlie Weber. Thank you.

Relative: Was it Charlie?

Yes. His name is Charles Weber.

Question: Okay.

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Yes. In fact, Beck wrote a book about that area and has a paper jacket book cover, and my grandfather's on the front.

He had a big beard and gray hair. He worked in the meadows, and it was cold, and that's why they grew these big beards, and he was real rough. He'd say, "Hello, little gal." I don't think he knew any of our names.

Question: Too many to count.

That's all I ever heard him say. We were scared to death of him because he looked so big and rough and everything.

Question: Of course.

And when I stayed with my grandmother, she had a couple rows of strawberries. I must have been about 12 or 13. I had to go and help her pick those strawberries, so I would stay overnight. He would be sitting in his Morris chair, sleeping. He had a glass eye. He took it out and put it in a glass of water. I think he drank some wine. I'm not sure, but I think he drank some wine. And he'd be snoring away, and I would have to walk past him to go to bed.

Question: Did you have to get up gumption to do that?

Yes, I was scared to death for fear he'd wake up, and don't ask me what he's going to do. Then I'd lay in bed thinking, oh, my God, when he comes upstairs, he'd go [makes thumping noise]. What if he makes a mistake and comes in my bedroom instead of my grandmother's? When you're young, everything scares you like that.

Question: It's funny the fears you have.

He was quite a character. In fact, when my grandmother died, he had pictures taken of her in her coffin and gave all the daughters this great big picture. When we were kids, my mother took it and hide it under the clothes in the bureau drawer. Once in a while, we'd go sneak a look.

Question: What was her name? Do you remember?

Pauline.

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Question: Pauline.

Yes.

Question: Did your parents ever talk about how they met and fell in love?

Yes. My mother was living in Green bank. I think she was on her way home from school, I'm not sure. My father was doing something there and he must have picked her up, and they got to be friendly. I guess they were a little older and still seeing one another, and they were on a date. I think they were only like 17, 18, because they were both the same age. When he went to take her home, there was a red sign on the house, it was quarantined. They had Scarlet Fever. One of her sisters passed away, and she wasn't allowed in, so he took her home with him. Didn't know what else to do with her, I guess. I think they must have gotten married because, I mean -

Question: the rest is history as they say.

Because he ended up staying with - my mother and father both lived home with my two older sisters were born there. That's when he had this big farm down in Nesco, and then he built these two rooms. In fact, we have pictures of it when it was just boards, just two rooms of boards.

Question: He built all of that himself?

He had help from an older gentleman in the area, just an old bachelor. There was no electricity, no backhoe, no anything.

Question: Where did you get your water from?

We had a pitcher pump outside, and we had an outhouse

Relative: I remember that. I didn't get a bathroom until I was about 10.

Question: Wow. Then you mentioned a bigger home. Did they add onto that two-room house?

Yes. It ended up a six room, eventually. Actually more, because then they added to the back a bathroom and like a utility room.

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Question: What would the sleeping arrangements be? Not to be nosy, but did all the boys sleep together, all the girls?

Well, we slept three in a bed.

Question: That was a big family.

Three in a bed.

Question: The bed was what size?

Well, it was a double bed.

Question: The old double beds because they didn't really manufacture queen and king beds until much later.

No. No. My mother always had a crib in her bedroom that the two-year-old was in, and the baby slept between her and my father. She had two kids in her room. There were three in this one and three in that one, and then my two uncles in the other one.

Relative: Tell them about the story when Aunt Jean had to go wake up Uncle Gus or Ernie, I don't remember which one.

She knows all these things. My sister Jean was in grammar school, and she must have been about 12 or 13, I would say. My two uncles slept upstairs. I guess one uncle came down and went to work or whatever he was doing because he helped my father on the farm. My mother said, "Go up and wake up, Uncle Ernie." She went upstairs. She came down. She went to school, and Uncle Ernie wasn't coming down. My mother went up, he was dead.

Question: Oh my God. I didn't expect that.

When she told my sister. She said, "I didn't want to upset you."

Question: She went to school?

She went to school. Never said a word said, "I didn't want to upset you."

Question: Oh my gosh. Uncle Ernie didn't have a spouse or have family?

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Neither of my uncles was ever married. I never knew them to have a girlfriend. I know Uncle Gus didn't have a girlfriend after he moved with us. But Uncle Ernie, every once in a while, he and my father didn't quite get along all the time.

Question: Yes, it happens in families.

He would get mad, and he'd say, "I'm going to Manayuk." He'd go out and hitchhike and he'd disappear for a month or more. Next thing you know, he's coming down the road again, comes; he sits at the table, just like he never left, went upstairs and sleeps. He'll stay for another couple of months, then he gets mad at my father again and he'd say, "I'm going to Manayuk." I think he had a girlfriend because why would he go to Manayuk?

Question: Yes. Who would he have been staying with otherwise? Who else would take him in?

We have no idea. No idea.

Question: Interesting.

But my brother didn't like him either. When my mother and father would go in town to do the shopping, my Uncle Ernie in the summer always shaved his head. My brother would get around the corner of the house and call him watermelon head.

Question: How did that sit with Uncle Ernie?

He was furious, he was wild, but my brother wasn't worried.

Question: When you said that you went in shopping for groceries, did you mean into the town of Hammonton?

Yes.

Question: What were the businesses like? Do you remember what Main Street looked like back in that day?

Yes, Miller's department store, Molinsky [phonetic] kids was more like a merchandise store, and the corner was a drugstore. I can't think what -

Relative: Ice cream?

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Well, across the street from the school was a little store called the Black and White.

Question: What was in there?

Blue and white, I guess it was. They sold candy, sandwiches, things like that.

Question: They probably did a good business from the kids, from the children coming and going.

Because when I stayed with my grandmother and grandfather, my grandfather in the morning would take out his little purse and he'd give me a dime for a sandwich. I got a bologna sandwich for a dime in that little Blue and White or whatever we called it.

Relative: I believe it was right across from the high school.

It was across from the high school.

Relative: Yes, it was right across from the high school.

Relative: Blue and white colors. Oh yes. Oh yes, yes. Now it makes sense.

Relative: Tell her about when grandpa used to take you into town, and he'd go get a beer.

When we picked berries in the summer and we only picked till lunchtime, because they had to get them packed and take them into town to the market.

Question: You did this as an afterschool job. That was your job or was it a chore that you just did?

Probably, but this was mostly in the summertime. Every once in a while, my father would take me with him. He would park on the side street right next to the drug store. He'd give me a nickel and he'd say, "Go in and get your double dip ice cream, and don't forget the Jimmy's." when you get it, come, and sit in the truck and wait for me," and I would. I think he must've gone and had a beer, I'm not sure. But anyway, I'd eat my ice cream on the way home. He would say, "Don't tell your sisters you got ice cream." I never told them. After he passed away, we were all grown, we were talking. I said, "I never told you this, but dad liked me best because he used to buy me ice cream." When I told them the story that he

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said, "Don't tell your sisters." They said, "He used to take me and tell me the same thing." We all thought we were special.

Question: I think that was the point.

Well, I think it was very smart of him.

Question: It was very smart of him.

All my life I thought I was his favorite.

Question: He was a great dad, wow. Do you remember the name of the drug store by any chance?

No, I really don't. It feels like it's there and it won't come out.

Question: Was it the Rexall drug store?

What was it?

Question: Was it the Rexall drug store at the end?

No. No.

Question: Godfreys?

No.

Question: Kelly's?

That sounds like it might have been that, but I'm not positive.

Question: Were you familiar with Kern's pharmacy when that was there? That was one of the drug stores downtown, but it probably would've been a bit later. A lot later, actually.

I really don't remember. When you're a kid, you don't pay attention to stuff like that.

Question: Yes, and a lot of businesses.

[Off-topic conversation]

Question: Did you ever go to the shore as a child, to the ocean? Did you ever get down to Atlantic City or to the beaches?

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When?

Question: When you were little.

Never. Every year, my father would give us a ticket when we picked berries, and they'd punch it, because the end of the year he's going to take us to Atlantic City to the Steel Pier, but he never had enough money at the end of the year. We never ever got there. Every year it was the same thing. We would pick berries and get this thick ticket, and we'd have so much on it that, but he never had enough money.

Question: Which berries were you picking at that time?

When you get older and look back, we were disappointed, but that was it. We did have one big special day and that was the 16th of July.

Question: Was that the day of the festival?

Yes. We got a new dress, that was the big thing, we all got a new dress. My father would bring us to Hammonton. He'd sit us on the curb, and we were so proud to see him take his \$3 or \$4, and pin it, they used to pin it on the statue.

Question: They still do.

I thought the men walked and they just took it now, because there is so much on it.

Question: I saw people pinning, maybe they do both; I don't know, recently, I saw that.

We were so proud to see him pinning. Then he'd take us to the carnival and hold our hand, so we don't get lost. There'd be three or four or five of us, I don't know. My mother never got to go, because she was always home with the babies, the youngest ones. We'd go on the carousel, and he put us on one of the things, it was like a big swing. One of these wooden swings that you'd see outside, but it was enclosed and all around it was black with dots in it or something. And this swing just went like this [Gesturing] but the outside went like this [Gesturing]. We thought we were turning upside down. We were screaming our heads off. He made them stop and got us off. We were so sure we were going to turn upside down, because the walls were going around us.

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Question: It felt that way.

After that, we stuck to the carousel.

Question: Tell them the time you took the bus to see Aunt Marie or the train.

You mean when I got ended up in Beach Haven?

Question: Yes.

My aunt used to take us for a couple days or something in Philadelphia. She would take us to - there used to be an aquarium. She'd take us to different places for a few days. Then I would go to the bus station because the Beach Haven bus went right past our house, so I could take that. But the Beach Haven had two buses. One went out over the plains, and one went through Hammonton, and I got on the wrong one. I was only about 13 years old, 12 or 13. When I realized I was on the wrong bus, I was scared to death. I told the bus driver, I went up and said, "I think I'm on the wrong bus." He never looked at my ticket, so it was his fault. He said, "That's all right, I'll take you home. I have to take the bus back, so you wait for me."

Question: That was nice of him.

So, I waited in the thing and got on the bus and got back home. I was scared to death, believe me. No phone, no money. Even if I did have the phone, I wouldn't have had money for it. When we got to our house, the whole family's out there waving him down.

Question: They missed you. They were wondering where you were at.

Well, they knew I made a mistake. They just didn't want me to make a mistake and go right past the house. That was scary. That was really scary.

Question: I bet. What an experience. Did your family have a phone?

No, we never had a phone. We didn't have a phone until years later. The neighbors across the street had a phone, and in emergencies, somebody would call there.

Question: Somebody would come over and let your family know?

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The neighbors across the street were the best neighbors anybody could ever have. Mrs. Frame was older, and Rachel, I guess must have been in her 30s. Bill well, he was in the first war, and he was gassed, so he had a problem. Judy was the musician.

Question: I'm sorry, what was their last name?

Their name was Frame. And that's who Hilda Stork married. Judy Frame.

Question: Yes, you mentioned her.

Relative: And how about Clara? Who was Clara?

Clara married Bill later in life. They lived there. She was from Egg Harbor; I think it was. They were Christian Science. Every Sunday night they would have company. We would lay on the lawn on our place right across the road, and their doors would be open, Rachel would be playing the piano, and they'd be laughing. This was our entertainment.

Question: I was just about to ask, with no television, no phone, what did you all do for entertainment?

Well, that was our entertainment. The next day, Rachel would come over. We thought they were leftovers. She used to say these are leftovers. It would be a big plate with little tea sandwiches, cookies, and candies. But I think she must have made extra because the plate was always filled.

Question: She brought it over to you all?

She would bring it over, and she'd sit there and talk to my mother. We would all sit on the floor around her, quiet, listen to every word she said because it was just so nice. They were such a nice family. Every Christmas, we each got a Christmas gift from them, all the kids.

Question: That's so sweet.

In fact, Rachael, the daughter, traveled once in a while. I don't know why. I don't remember where the two men in her house were. Maybe they were still living there and didn't go home late, but she always had me stay with her mother at night. I guess she paid me, I don't remember. I would have to feed the chickens, and gather the eggs, and go to school. When I came home, I would run across the

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street to see mom and everything, but back to Mrs. Frames, and she'd make my dinner. At night, Mrs. Frame and I would sit in the - they call it the library, and she would read her Christian Science.

Question: This was within their home; they had a reading room?

Yes. I think it was probably the dining room, but they call it the library because they had there a lot of books. Of course, I didn't have any tablets or anything like that. I had an old envelope, I opened it. While she's reading, I was doodling with the newspaper, drawing different cartoons. When Mrs. Frame died, the old Mrs. Frame, that envelope was in her papers. She had written across the top "Catherine's drawings." Rachel went over and gave it to my mother. I have it myself.

Question: She really loved you kids.

It's 1940. No, it's in the '30s.

Question: She kept that all those years?

Yes.

Question: Wow, amazing. Now you got older, and you mentioned a few jobs that you'd done. Did most of the women work outside their homes at all back then?

No. Once you had children who were all growing up, everybody stayed. The women didn't work.

Question: The women that did work, what type of jobs did they do?

Well, I think most of them worked in Hammonton in the coat factories and the factories here. In fact, I have a book that some of the interviews from some of the women that worked in those days. They all said their bosses were so nice to them, which was nice to hear.

Question: Absolutely.

When a factory like that, especially Kessler, I think it was the Kessler factory.

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Relative: Yes, it was.

Question: It's not what you always see depicted in movies. Or when people talk about that era, you often hear about how factory workers were mistreated or overworked.

They had about four interviews from different women, and they all said the same thing. They were very well-treated.

Question: That is very special.

Yes. That I was pleased to hear that because I had heard too that people worked in factories were mistreated. But no, it was so nice to hear that, to read that.

Question: Did your family picnic at Batsto at the Lake or at Nescochague Lake? Or did you get to swim anywhere during the hot summers?

Relative: Tell them that story now.

Well, the end of my father's property, which went back quite a ways, there was a big cranberry bog. Through the cranberry bog was a creek, and there was a road going all around it, because I guess when they picked the cranberries, they picked them up or something. There was a bridge, and we used to jump off that bridge and swim in the Creek. That was fun. My mother would say, "No jumping off that bridge," and that's the way we got in the water. Of course, the dog that we took with us would bark like crazy. He should know that he wouldn't jump. He would find a way down without jumping, but we would jump in.

Question: Did you have lots of pets? You had a pet dog.

We always had a dog.

Question: You always had a dog?

Yes.

Question: Was there one in particular that you remember, a favorite?

Well, they were mostly, when we were younger, hunting dogs, they were outside dogs. The last dog that they had down there was a pet, because my father used to go gunning and always had a gunning dog.

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Question: Did your father have any other hobbies? What did the adults do? It sounds like your mother probably was very occupied with childcare. She had got so many children at home.

She sure was.

Question: She had her hands full. Your father, he hunted? Did he have any other hobbies?

No, I think that was about it.

Question: And where your home was, did I get it right, that was a farm. He worked a farm right there.

Yes.

Question: What did he grow?

Well, he had two farms. One was half-a-mile away, and the farm right at the house. He had a contract with Campbell Soup for tomatoes. Of course, we had strawberries, and raspberries, and blackberries, and they went to market.

Question: How about your blueberries? When did they come in?

Well, no, blueberries were not even heard of when I was there. They were huckleberries because we used to go back in the woods and pick huckleberries.

Question: In the wild.

Yes.

Question: And any cranberries, or no?

Well, the cranberry bog was right there. After they finished picking, whoever did, my mother and one of the neighbors used to go, and they were allowed to pick anything that was left. My mother would make cranberry sauce. There wasn't an awful lot left. They would just pick one here and one there, I guess, because for the men, you would scoop.

Right. Daughters, were you expected to help in the kitchen and help with the cleaning in the house?

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We did everything: babysat, changed diapers, everything, had to.

Question: How about your dinners on Sunday?

Question: Tell us about that, was that the traditional thing that your family did? Did your mom fix a big dinner every Sunday?

Every Sunday we had spaghetti dinner. We always had about 40, 50 chickens, because we lived with eggs all the time. We would have to corner the chickens in the corner, so that my father could catch a couple of them to kill them. Soon as he said, "Get in the pen," I would run upstairs and cover my ears because if I heard the chickens cackling, I couldn't eat it. He never asked for me. Never. Never once said, "Where's Catherine?" No, he must have known.

Question: He knew it was too much for you.

Yes.

Question: Did the chicken go in the spaghetti sauce?

Yes, that's what it was. When she went shopping, she always bought hamburger and had meatballs too. But in-between, it was chicken and meatballs.

Question: And tell them about how she bought the pasta when she bought the pasta.

A 20-pound box in a wooden - it was real, this wood that I don't what they call it, it's real flimsy like [Inaudible 1:06:28.6]. Yes, 20 pounds about this big, about this high.

Question: She had a crowd to feed.

My mother used to crochet a lot. She made booties, she was paid, baby booties, and she was paid to do that.

Question: So that gave her a little spending cash, I would assume.

Yes, at home she did that.

Question: Tell us more about the war time. Can you think of any other stuff associated with that? You were young.

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The war ended. I was only what, 19. It was a nice day on Broad Street, we were kissing all the Marines. Marines and sailors were just flooding the streets.

Question: Were most of the men in uniform back then? The young men I would assume.

Yes.

Question: I can only imagine.

Yes. Well, we were happy. Everybody was happy.

Question: It's a big day.

It was like the parade on the New Year's Day because everybody out of the shops and everything. Everybody's celebrating, it was a happy day.

Question: I can't think of anything else to ask. Is there anything else that we neglected to ask or is there anything you can think of?

Relative: She already told me that she could hear the sounds coming from the racetrack as child a little bit. She was very young at the time.

Oh, is that right?

Relative: Very young, they lived fairly close to that area.

And could hear that going.

Relative: Yes.

Question: It's interesting for us to hear that way of life. I appreciate you sharing everything that you've shared.

Relative: Yes, we can sit here for another three hours.

Relative: We're just getting warmed up.

Everything was free that we did. All our entertainment, everything was free, we had no money. You had to make your own entertainment.

Relative: Just tell one more story. Tell them about when you went ice skating.

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Well, one of the neighbors had a big cranberry bog, and they called it the Cross Run. They would flood the cranberry bogs, so that the vines didn't freeze if it was ice on them. Eddy Kleinberg [Phonetic] from Hammonton here, had a car with a rumble seat. Then we would fit eight or nine people in there, they're piled on top of the other, and we'd go back there skating. And I fell in in the middle of the cranberry bog. The water was only a couple feet deep, and I had to break my way to shore. Every time I put my knee up, I went back down again. I missed a whole week of school because my knees were like this, they were all cut up and swollen.

Question: How did you get home?

They wouldn't let me in the car because I was wet. They made me stand on the running board, and it was a dirt road. We went through a curve and there was a ditch, we went around the ditch, my hands were cold. I lost, and I fell in the ditch, but it was just dirt and weeds and things, it wasn't water.

Question: Broke your fall then, luckily. Luckily, the brush was there.

Well, he wasn't going that fast, just that my hands were so cold, I lost the grip.

Question: I could see how it would happen; it was winter.

It didn't stop me from skating though.

Question: You went back?

Yes.

Question: Did you get in trouble? Did you get in trouble from your mom or your dad?

No, my mom took care of me, I guess I was in bed for a while. She was used to this kind of stuff.

Question: By the time you had your family and were raising your family, where were your children born?

In Philadelphia.

Question: Did you live in the Philadelphia area at that point with your husband?

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Yes, I was living there. My uncle that I lived with when I first moved there to work at the Navy Yard, my uncle had a first store on Walnut Street, and I lived with them. It was nice.

Question: You had family around, at least. You were out having an adventure and raising your family.

Well, it was an adventure living with my uncle.

Question: Tell us about him.

Well, he was just a nice person and fun to be with. In fact, even later years, when my kids were growing up and I was in living in Audubon, he would come and visit. Sandy and her friends would all come to listen to Uncle Art stories, because he was a storyteller.

Question: A good storyteller.

Relative: My chief regret is not having a way to record his stories, because he was such a good storyteller.

He made most of them up. When we lived there, he was really fun to live with. We call it the home of broken arms because he'd wrestle with us and he had us exercising. In fact, up until, I would say maybe eight or nine years ago, I did his exercise every morning.

Question: Did he have a special routine he did?

Bend over 10 times and touch your toes, and go to an open window if you could, and take 10 deep breaths. That's how he made us do.

Question: I think we just learned the secret of your longevity, a new routine we're going to establish here.

I can't do that anymore because I would fall over.

Question: I really appreciate you taking the time out of your day to come and talk to us.

I hope I didn't bore you too much.

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Question: No, we wanted to hear the details, that's what was important to us. If you think of anything you want to add, or if you want to get together another time at some point with other stories, we're more than willing to sit down with you. When we get this transcribed, like I said earlier, we'll run the copy by you so you can look through it. If maybe the names aren't clear or something's not right, you can help us correct it. You can do the proofreading.

Relative: I'll bring the stuff down that I have that you can have, okay.

[End of Interview]