

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
MILDRED WUILLERMIN

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

PROVIDED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

INTERVIEWED BY: MARION O'NEILL

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Mildred Wuillermin  
Interviewed by Marion O'Neill  
Monday, February 5, 2007  
At Mildred's home at 9th and 2nd Road

Q: Mildred, how many years have you lived here?

A: I have lived here over 54 years.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born on Messina Ave. in Hammonton.

Q :How old are you?

A: I am 80 years old. This is my 81st year.

Q: What is your birthdate?

A: My birthdate is June 21, 1926.

Q: You were born here and raised here in Hammonton. How about your parents, did they come to this country?

A: Yes. They immigrated from Italy. My father came first and my mother followed approximately 2 years afterward.

Q: Where were they married?

A: They were married in Italy.

Q: How many brothers and sisters?

A: I am one of seven siblings, three brothers and three sisters plus myself.

Q: Are they all still living?

A: No. Four of us are living now.

Q: What kind of work did your parents do?

A: Well, my mother was a homemaker. She kept quite busy with seven siblings. My father had several jobs. When he first came over he worked in the Hammonton Shoe factory that was located on Front St. He also worked for Falciani and Ruberton in construction. In his later years he worked for the Eastern Brewery Beverage (owned by Penza). They made, was it Old Milwaukee beer.

Q: When were you married?

A: I was married in November, 1946.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: I met him, I was friendly with his sister. We were in the same class.

Q: What was her name? Is she still living?

A: Lee Olivo. She is deceased. She was pretty well known. We were married for 54 years. My husband died in June of 2002. We were in our 56th year of marriage. They were the best years.

Q: You met your husband through your girlfriend. How long did you go together?

A: Well. I met him in my senior year of high school and I graduated in 1944 and we were married in 1946.

Marion: You were a very young bride. That is very young.

Mildred: Yes. I was 20. Considering today's standards.

Q: How old was your husband when you got married?

A: He was 23.

Q: Where did he live?

A: In Hammonton all his life. His family owned a small berry farm right here at this location. He was born across the street.

Q: In fact we are looking at the lot right now, correct?

A: Yes. That is the homestead across the street. He didn't go very far. He just went across the street. They had a small berry farm.

Q: What kind of berries?

A: They raised raspberries, black berries, black diamonds. It was approximately 20 acres. His father died when he was 19 and took over the family farm. He was the oldest. He never liked berries. In the depression growing up they just about eked out a living so he turned to vegetables.

When he passed he had accumulated over 250 acres that we farm in vegetables.

Q: What about his parents? Wuillermin doesn't sound like an Italian name.

Is it an Italian name?

A: Yes it is Italian. His grandfather came from the northern part of Italy where the French, Swiss and Italian borders meet. He came from a little town in the Iosta valley. That is Santason. If you go there you will realize there are Wuillermins all over the place.

Q: Where they originally from maybe Switzerland or another country going back?

A: My husband and I visited over there on my 20th anniversary and we met and spoke to a guide who said going back years borders change so often and the Wuillermins came from the lower part of the valley and then there were Wuillerminesque and they came from the upper part of the valley.

Q: How did they spell their name?

A: They added an "esque" to the end of Wuillermin. Can you imagine? The Italian alphabet does not have a "w" but what they had was a double "v" and when they came over to this country and they looked at it I guess the double "v" became a "W".

Q: I saw the tractor out front of your house. Tell me about the tractor.

A: Oh! That was my husband's pride and joy. That tractor is a 1923 model, the year he was born.

Q: He used that tractor?

A: Yes. It was one of the tractors he had found and they used it for awhile and he decided to set it up there as an artifact.

Q: Your husband went into vegetables. What kind of vegetables did he grow?

A: He raised a variety of vegetables. We started with sweet corn. We had zucchini, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers. We started originally with tomatoes. We raised tomatoes for Campbell Soup and then Campbell Soup moved their facilities out of Camden and that is when we diversified and went into everything else. We raised quite a bit of sweet corn for awhile. He was known as the sweet corn king.

Q: He has gotten some awards you told me.

A: Oh yes. He was very active in both local community service and agriculture. He served two terms on town council. He was a member of the planning board for over 20 years. He was a director at William B.Kessler Hospital for 29 years.

Marion: He was active politically as well as in agriculture.

Mildred: Yes. In agriculture he served as the director of New Jersey Farm Bureau when it first started. He was one of the founding members. He was known as Mr. Farm Bureau for a long time because he introduced a lot of other farmers in the local area to join. He served on the county board of agriculture. He was also president of the New Jersey Board of Agriculture. He served there for four years.

Q: Did he receive a medal?

A: Yes. He received a medal from the New Jersey Agriculture Society. That is the oldest society in the country. It was founded in 1781 and the award that he received was a gold medallion and that was for service for agriculture. He really appreciated that.

Q: How many children did the two of you have?

A: We have four children, two boys and two girls and we have eight grandchildren and one great-grand child.

Q: After you got married did you work at all?

A: Yes. I worked until my first child was born. When I first met Ed I was going to business school in Atlantic City. When I graduated I worked in Atlantic City for awhile.

Q: What was the name of the business school?

A: New Jersey College of Business on 1616 Pacific Ave.

Q: How did you get there?

A: By train. There was a train that left early in the morning. Luckily there was one that came back in the afternoon.

Q: What kind of courses did you have?

A: I took the business accounting course. I graduated as a junior accountant. Then I met Ed and I never went any further. I did take care of the books of the business.

Q: Tell me about your children. Let's start with Ed. I know that he is your first born.

A: Ed is the oldest. He went to Kings College. He graduated with a degree in political science. He is a licensed planner of New Jersey. Recently he was elected to town council with a new party that was formed in Hammonton, I guess have heard about it (Hammonton First). He is in the business. About 25 years ago he joined his father and his brother.

My second child is also a boy, August. He stayed on the farm with his father. He and Ed run the operation today. Then I had two girls. Lizann is the oldest girl. She is a photographer. She went to Moore college of art. She started out in illustration and then had a course in photography and

she loved it so much so she went into photography and she has her own business today. She lives in Folsom and she is very happy with it and she is quite successful. My second daughter is Cindy. She graduated from the University of Delaware. She has a degree in business management. She is married to David Burger. They have three children. Katie and David are in college. Lauren is in grade school.

Q: She is in the business too. She does the books.

A: Yes. She does the books.

Q: Do you still do any of the work for the business?

A: No. I keep my finger in the pie but that is about it.

Q: Tell me about Ed. How many children does he have?

A: Ed had two children, a boy and a girl. His son graduated from Rowan and then he went down to Savannah and attended the Savannah school of Arts and Design and he now works for channel 6 in computer animation. In fact he does the little "Mister 6" that comes on at five o'clock. Ed's daughter graduated from Washington college in journalism. She graduated with a degree in English and journalism. She is working for the Hammonton Gazette right now. She has a creative mind. She loves to write.

Q: So Ed's two children are not into the farming?

A: No. They are not. August has a son that stayed on the farm. He likes that very much. He has another son that graduated from Momouth University this past summer. Their oldest child is a girl, Monica. She graduated from Rowan. She is married, has a little boy and she teaches in Washington Township.

Q: So you have a great-grand child, a boy. How old is he and what is his name?

A: His name is Luca. Very Italian. I call him Luke. He his approximately six months old.

Q: How many children did August have?

A: Three. Two boys and a girl. Lizann is single. She has a cat. I think she would like it if I mentioned that she has a cat.

Q: What is the cat's name?

A: I think it is Miss Kitty.

Q: Tell me some of the things you and your husband liked to do for entertainment.

A: My husband liked to travel. Any time that we had a little bit of time off his idea was to get in the car and ride. He loved to see the countryside. We

were very fortunate that Ed had a widowed aunt who would come down and she would baby sit the children and we would just take off and maybe go off for either a long weekend or a week. In 1968 we decided to go to California. We left right after the new year. We were gone for five weeks. That was wonderful. It wasn't like it is today, commercialized. Everything was a little bit laid back.

Q: Did you drive out to California?

A: Yes. We drove out.

Q: What were some things that you stopped at?

A: Well. We went south first. We went to New Orleans. I remember we watched the Super Bowl III which Joe Namath won and my husband was a great football buff in fact he played football in high school and he played football in semi-pro too for the Hammonton Peaches and the Hammonton Bakers. He enjoyed going to the Eagles games. In fact when he first started he would go off on Sunday afternoons and I was more or less like a grass widow. So finally one day I said you know maybe I should get a ticket to the games. He said sure I would be glad to get you a ticket. So I became a football fan. In fact toward the end I think I enjoyed football more than he did. We took a lot of long trips. We went to Puerto Rico. We went

to Canada. We went to Italy twice. In 1983 we went on that trip that the group from Hammonton went on. That was a wonderful trip.

Marion: I remember my Aunt Catherine mentioning it because I did an interview with my Aunt Catherine Amendolia. She mentioned some of the people that went on that trip. Mildred: Yes. We were all Hammonton people. What was nice about it was everybody looked out for everybody else and we knew everyone and it was quite congenial.

Q: Obviously you did a lot of traveling. What else did you do socially, friends, going out to dinner on weekends?

A: Oh yes. We had a group of friends. We would go out every Saturday night for dinner. In fact one of our favorite places was the Beachcomer Inn on route 9. We went there for years. This one friend of ours had a van. It was called a station wagon then. John Caporale. We were four or five couples every Saturday night we would pile into his station wagon. We would go out to dinner. Sometimes we would go dancing.

Q: Where would you go dancing?

A: We would go to Buena Vista had different dances at the country club, at school affairs, they would hold valentine dances or school dances. They were always having fun raisers. That was a fun time. We would just pile in.

I remember one time we decided to go to New York, to Mama Leone's. We had heard so much about Mama Leone's. We all piled in. By the time we got there, there was such a long waiting line and then we were so disappointed in the food we vowed that we would just stick to our own area.

Q: What were some of the names of your friends?

A: There was John and Loretta Caporale, Lou and Mina Berenato, Dan and Josie Caporale and some others but they were the core. We had some great times together every Saturday night. We had some good friends of ours too was Louise Miller Scott. I don't know if you remember Charlie Miller. He was president of Peoples Bank for years. Louise went to school with Ed. They were very good friends and they stayed friends throughout the years. Whenever Louise and Andy would come down and we would go out to dinner. They were very fun people.

Q: So you had a lot of good times. How about playing cards. Did you ever acquire a group?

A: Yes. We played poker during the holidays with my family. The family would get together and we would play just during the holidays. I also bowled. I bowled on the nightowl league. That was sponsored by the

Galletta brothers and Sara and Sue and I there was Pat Gerona and also Sue's sister-in-law.

Q: So, this was the bowling alley here in Hammonton?

A: Yes. We used to bowl every Wednesday night on the nightowl league.

Marion: I remember that. My parents bowled. I remember the old bowling alley before they built the new one. It burned down remember?

Mildred: yes. We bowled in the old one.

Q: What are some of the things you would like to do now that your husband passed away and I know that is difficult?

A: Well. I think now most of my enjoyment is with the grandchildren and maybe occasionally cooking a meal for the family. We take day trips. I don't mind a day trip. I don't think I would enjoy going for any length of time away.

Q: What are some of the things you liked to cook for your husband and you?

A: My husband loved any kind of food. He often would say we should open up a restaurant. I said yes, and I would do all the cooking and you would greet the people. He enjoyed until his last illness and his heart condition.

Marion: Mildred, this has been wonderful. I have enjoyed spending this time with you. We go to the wellness center together and exercise and that is how I met Mildred. We have had a lot of laughs and good times. It has been wonderful. I know your children. I have met them and what a wonderful family you have. I have met some of your grandchildren and you are blessed. I thank you so much for sharing this time with me and sharing your memories and your family with me.

Mildred: Yes Marion. Thank you for choosing me to be interviewed. I hope that I have fulfilled your wishes and I tell you that I feel that I have had a full and happy life. I count my blessings every day. It has been wonderful. We have had hard times, we have had happy times, we have had sorrowful times but all in all it has been a wonderful life. Thank you.

Dict.: Marion O'Neill 2/5/07

Trans: cafe 7/13/12



MARRIED NOVEMBER 23, 1946, AT ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH  
RECEPTION AT THE LILLIAN-ON-TH-LAKE



TAKEN THE NIGHT EDWARD WUILLERMIN RECEIVED THE  
GOLD MEDALLION FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO  
AGRICULTURE.

STANDING, L TO R, EDWARD WUILLERMIN, JR., LIZ  
WUILLERMIN, CINDY BERGER, AND AUGUST WUILLERMIN.

SEATED: EDWARD AND MILDRED WUILLERMIN