

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Betty Sharp

December 4, 2010



Interviewed by Rob Jacoby

Transcribed by Maureen Block

Rob: Hi, my name is Rob Jacoby. I'm with the Historical Society of Stillwater Township and this is part of our ongoing oral history program to collect the memories of Stillwater from its residents and former residents and today I'm fortunate enough to be in the home of Mrs. Betty Sharp. It's December 4, 2010. Thank you very much joining our oral history program Mrs. Sharp. Would you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

Betty: I was born June 11, 1927 in a little town called Arum in Holland.

Rob: Can you spell that?

Betty: A-r-u-m. And I lived there until I was 2 years 10 months old. Then we came to America.

Rob: Why did your parents come here?

Betty: My dad wanted, well he was the youngest, well just about the youngest of seven boys and if you have a farm there the oldest son gets it. The youngest one, he - well you don't know. You may work for someone else and he wanted to have his own place eventually.

Rob: So he was a farmer in Holland?

Betty: Yes.

Rob: And then where did you move when you came here?

Betty: There's a fellow that my dad knew that came to America and he lived in Garfield and he had a farm so he took my dad in and, he worked there for several years. He made sure he had a home for us. He had to have a job, he had to - you know take care of us. And in those days they didn't let anybody in like they do today and, they didn't want welfare. So, when my dad could take care of us, they had to be at a place on Gracie Avenue and my mother and I came in April. My dad came in February.

Rob: Did your parents speak English?

Betty: Nope.

Rob: And what were their names?

Betty: My dad's name was well it was Jacobus. They called him Jake and his last name was Broersma. In Holland they said "Broozma." Here they changed it. And my mother's name in Holland was Tadankya but here it was Trina. And of course my name Bietske and they knew people that had that name and they changed it and they gave me Bessie and oh, I hated it with a passion.

Rob: How long were you called Bessie?

Betty: By the time I left eighth grade I was pretty well Betty. Um, I think sixth or seventh grade. I mean I just didn't like it and they said they were willing to change it with me, you know to Betty. And

'cause they had a choice of Bessie or Betty and I liked Betty better. You're a farmer - Bessie the cow - forget it. No.

Rob: So did you go through schooling in Garfield? All through high school?

Betty: Well, kindergarten. And then my dad rented the farm in Long Valley and we were there several years. I went to well... I went to Long Valley School and then he got a place in Chester and then I went to Chester grammar school and that's where I graduated there. And then I had one year in Somerville High School, well Bernardsville High School and then he moved two miles away which put us in Morris County and I had to go to Morristown High School. So I went there for a couple of years and then my dad came over to Greendel and he bought a farm because each place he went he went just a little bigger until he could get his own place. And, so that's where I ended up in Greendel.

Rob: Did moving around a lot make it difficult to make friends?

Betty: Yes, I mean you made friends but you couldn't keep them. You had to keep making new ones so I know when I had my kids I said to my husband, I said, "we're not moving". "The kids are staying in one school" and he agreed with me 'cause he had moved and he says, "nope" and it worked out perfect.

Rob: And where did you finish high school?

Betty: I only finished the third year in Newton.

Rob: Uh, huh.

Betty: And then I went to work in Sears in what's the Beehive now. And I started, I worked in the catalogue department and I only was there two or three months and my mother passed away so then I came home and I kept the house for my dad but I was engaged to my husband then. He was overseas in Austria. So uh....

Rob: So you first moved to Sussex County ... how old were you?

Betty: Well, my mother died in '46 so '45 maybe '44 or '45. April, I know it was April. Everything was always April for farmers and uh. But...we had a nice place there and I mean a nice house and a nice farm. It was really a nice place but then my mother had asthma real bad and then she got an asthma attack and in 4 days she was gone.

Rob: Wow and where was this farm exactly?

Betty: In Greendel.

Rob: In Greendel.

Betty: About uhas you came from Greendel and went to Johnsonburg I would imagine over the railroad track - the second farm. So, yeah.

Rob: Ummm..

Betty: It's still a farm today but they have horses. So...

Rob: How did you meet your husband?

Betty: He was working there for the fellow that...my dad bought the farm and my husband was working for that fellow so my husband - my dad kept him 'cause he was going to need help so he stayed there. That's how I met him.

Rob: And what was your husband's name?

Betty: Clarence Sharp. So I mean um, he worked for my dad until oh, (sigh). Well I'd say about six...three...four. Four or five months after we were married 'cause then he went down to Aulderney(?) farms and he got a job down there. And then he said, "you know I really don't want to stay in farming. I'd rather do something else." So then we came to Sussex County and then he worked for John Hodges up there which he wasn't too happy with it but he was there about five or six months and then Lawrence Earl was looking for somebody for work and then we moved into Helen Scare(sp?) house upstairs and then he started working for Lawrence and he learned the mason's trade from him.

Rob: Were you already married at this point?

Betty: Oh yeah, because I had a two year old daughter.

Rob: When, when did you get married? What year?

Betty: July, July 7, 1947.

Rob: And you were working at Sears and he was working - starting to work for Lawrence Earl?

Betty: No, uh no, I worked at Sears and then my husband worked for my - my dad and then I mean when my mother died my husband was in service and then I came home and kept the house.

Rob: Did you have a choice of going to Austria? When he was in the Army?

Betty: No, no, we weren't married.

Rob: Oh, you weren't married at that point.

Betty: We weren't married then yet. We were engaged but we weren't married.

Rob: And did your husband get his own farm at some point?

Betty: Nope, never. He worked for Lawrence Earl and then... \$1.25 an hour I mean you're going back then I mean but then you only paid \$40 a month rent. Everything was so much cheaper. And I think in a way better in some ways but - but anyway no he worked there and I don't know Trina was a freshman I think in high school. There were four or five fellows that worked for

Lawrence Earl and they had the chance to get another job after work and to try and make a little extra money and Lawrence wasn't too happy about it so he gave the fellows a choice that either they came back to him or they were through - they were on their own and my husband was on his own from then on.

Rob: And what did he do?

Betty: He was a mason but I mean once in a while - every once in a while Lawrence would say, "gee, Clarence, I need - I got a job and I could really use a good mason" and he would go back and help Lawrence out but I mean they stayed friends you know - I mean you know but it's just that Clarence felt that he had a chance to get on his own and...

Rob: And was he a mason on new construction?

Betty: Yeah, he did mason work. He loved stonework. And, he did carpenter work but he loved the stonework and the masonry work.

Rob: And where about were most of the jobs?

Betty: He did an awful lot around here and he did a lot for the State of Pennsylvania for the ... when they were repairing a lot of those um...oh, I don't know what they were. They were old homes but they were fixing them up. The Van Campen.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: He was there and he tore a lot of that down. He had five or six men with him and they....every stone had to be numbered. Every stone had to go back and I mean he was there for two years. He loved that. Anything with stone - he loved stone yeah.

Rob: Tell me how you happened to move into the Wintermute house and tell me about the house too.

Betty: Well, we uh, we lived in Skinner's house. Oh, well Jeannie was 7 months old.

Rob: Which is the Skinner's house?

Betty: That was the house right across from um the General Store - the 2-story house.

Rob: On - on - in Stillwater?

Betty: Yeah, we were upstairs and of course it was small and then the lady that lived in Harold Garriss' house next to the store - she passed away and that became available so we lived there for nine years. And then my daughter she had asthma so then we went out west for a while and when we came back uh, we had to find a place to go. So then, Donald wasn't in the house no more so we went in the house. When we went there, there was no water in the house. There was a pump with a cistern. There was a pump outside, an outhouse, three stoves for heat, I mean you were going back then you know - really going back.

Rob: How old was the house?

Betty: Was 1755 the house was built.

Rob: All stone?

Betty: Uh, yeah, except the kitchen and they said the kitchen at one time was the little General Store. Um....it had a great big fireplace inside and of course my husband - we didn't know there was a fireplace there but he says, "you know, there's got to be a fireplace back there". So he tore that one wall down. It was when we were doing the dining room over. It had a beautiful fireplace there. It had a Dutch oven in it. It had the hook there for the kettle but nothing else.

Rob: Did you keep that exposed?

Betty: The Dutch oven is still there.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah, and then he did the fireplace and as he tore the wall off there was an opening a little wider than the card table that went up to the bedroom and he said that was a spiral stair that went up to the bedroom but it was sealed. But then we put a china closet in there because it was just a hole that's all it was and, so little by little he did things for it. The first year we were there - we came in August and the following spring the water came in the house in the bathroom and then uh...

Rob: From a flood or from?

Betty: No, we just - we just put - put the water in the house so we could have the bathroom...

Rob: Oh, I see you installed water?

Betty: Yeah, and then the kitchen got done over a little bit so this way we had a sink and one thing another. It was really nothing. You had just a sink - a little sink that was a pump - it was a cistern. That was all there was. You wanted well water, you went outside and uh... It's a big kitchen - a beautiful country kitchen. I loved it. And I mean love canning and stuff so I needed the room.

Rob: Before you got electricity how did you light the uh..?

Betty: Electricity was there.

Rob: Oh, it was.

Betty: Came there in '29 - in the house and then the following year they put the garage up outside. And then the following year the baseboard hot water heat came in so then we were really...you think you were living then.

Rob: Luxurious.

Betty: Oh, gosh yeah.

Rob: How far from the river was it?

Betty: Oh gee, I don't know. Not too far. I mean, it was pretty close.

Rob: Were there ever times when during floods the river came very close to the house?

Betty: In '55. That's when we had the hurricanes back to back. And I mean the whole fields all the way across the woods. Gus Roof's place - all the way down - it was just one great big - looked like a humongous lake.

Rob: How did you get about?

Betty: You didn't go nowhere for several days. The bridge in Middleville was broke down - it flooded away. Um...going to Blairstown the road was flooded. Going to Stillwater - to go over the bridge it was all flooded. You couldn't get out of Stillwater for several days.

Rob: Your house was high and dry though or..?

Betty: Oh, yeah, I mean there was water in the cellar but I mean the house was fine. Yeah, so I mean, a lot of people had water in the cellar. It ran - it ran right in what used to be Alvin Roy's house. Um, Steve Gillan lives there now. It ran right through there and right around the house by the one the state owns. Oh, and we, like darn fools, we walked across that bridge. We didn't know if there was going to be a hole there or not. We walked it just to see what was there.

Rob: How many days was it like that?

Betty: Five, six days - maybe a week but I mean we had enough in the house you didn't have to worry and the General Store - it did have some stuff. I mean bread and milk was going quick but uh....

Rob: I guess school was cancelled?

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah, no wait I think there was no school it was summer.

Rob: Where did your kids go to school?

Betty: Stillwater.

Rob: In the elementary school?

Betty: Yep, they went all the way through Stillwater. When Trina went it was the very first addition and then when Jeannie went it was a little bigger and by the time Bob got in it had got to the size it is now.

Rob: Tell - You mentioned your children a little bit uh, tell me their names and when they were born.

Betty: Trina is the oldest one and she was born in 1948 and uh, she's what 62 now so that's the one that makes me feel old. And then Jeannie came along four years later ...'48 what's that about...well she's 58 now and then Bobby came along five years later so..

Rob: Were any of them born while you were living in the stone house?

Betty: No. They were all...when we moved into the stone house Bobby was 3, Trina was 10 so I mean they were there already but oh, Bob he loved it. He loved the water and he loved fishing. He loved fishing.

Rob: And it sounds like you really enjoyed living in that house?

Betty: Yeah, and Jeannie, I mean she oh, Clarence would always help Donald on the farm and as soon as she was home from school she was in the hayfield and driving the tractor or any of that. She loved that.

Rob: And you mentioned Donald a couple of times. This is Donald Sharp.

Betty: Yeah, that's my brother-in-law.

Rob: And he, he was farming the Sharp farm?

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Did he - you mentioned he lived in the stone house?

Betty: Yeah, when I was expecting Trina the oldest one they moved in - he bought the house or he rented it. He rented it from Vernie Louis and then he was there several years and then he bought it from Vernie Louis and then when he bought it from Vernie Louis he moved to the house up by the road.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: So that's when this house was empty for over a year. That's when we came in it. And like I said it was an adventure 'cause I mean there was no heat - no nothing. I mean you're just like you're starting - you're living like the Amish, ha ha, you know.

Rob: Yeah. How long did you live there?

Betty: We lived there - Stillwater 55 years just about.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: And, 'cause all three kids went to school there and to Newton High School. They all went to Stillwater Presbyterian Church. They were all married there. So you know, so Trina she's married what 37 years now so you know. We been there a while.

Rob: Now I believe you had a craft shop in the house. Tell me about that.

Betty: Well I just like playing with pinecones and things and I started making things and I'd go to craft fairs and I started selling a few. And then I thought well gee you know. I was selling a few from the house during the holiday and I said you know I'm going to get in trouble I said I better go get a variance. I had no trouble I mean they came down and they uh - I had to have a separate entrance which was a hall. It was a big central hall and the sign could be so big and it had to be on that certain tree in Donald's front yard. There was no problem so I mean they gave me the variance. That didn't cost anything. Now I mean it cost you money to get it. And, so then they told me I could have up to 50% of my downstairs so we fixed the central hall up. And I mean then I was selling crafts during the holidays and of course if I was making jelly they'd come and smell it. That's how I started selling jellies and jams in the shop because "gee what did you make?" "Strawberry jam." Whatever, so I started selling it. But before I knew it I was making 114 kinds of jellies and jams. Plus pickles and relishes.

Rob: How can there be that many different kinds?

Betty: Uh, I just mixed them up and made them my own.

Rob: Wow, was this everything that you grew yourself?

Betty: Well, a lot of it I mean and then I would go picking berries across the brook. I wouldn't do it now with the bears but I mean into the blackcaps and the wineberries and black be...the black raspberries um elderberries. I mean you name it. We went all over for them.

Rob: Tell me about the crafts themselves. What kinds of things did you make?

Betty: What kind of things did I make?

Rob: Describe them for the uh... the people that can't see it on tape.

Betty: Well, I made a six-foot gold pinecone tree. And I ended up having it in a magazine. I had to think of the five different magazines.

Rob: Highlighting you?

Betty: Yep, they started finding out about me and they started wanting to know what I did.

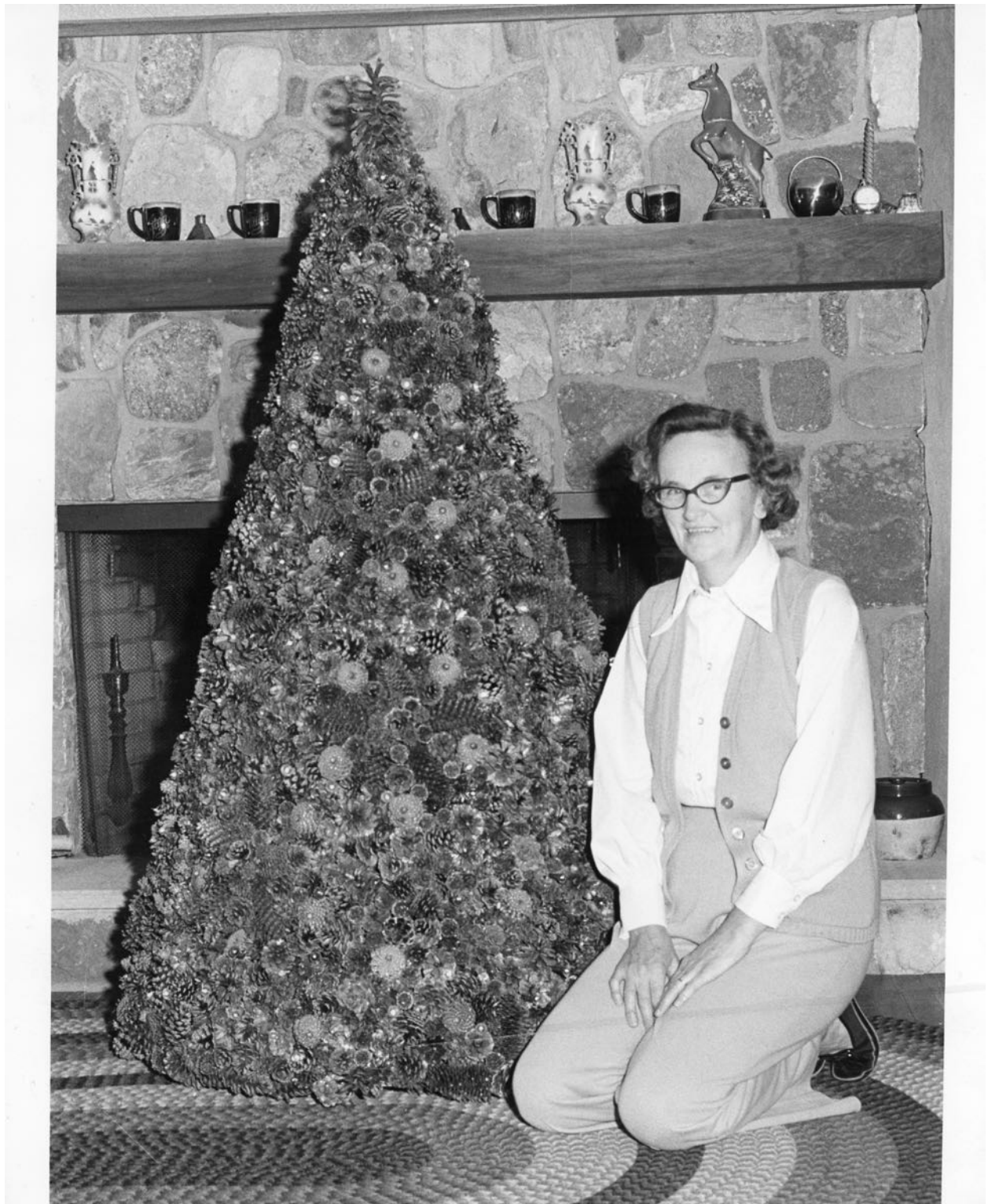
Rob: Did you advertise in any way?

Betty: A little bit at the holidays. That was it.

Rob: This is a pinecone tree. [see photo next page]

Betty: Six foot tall.

Rob: Six foot tall. How many of these did you make?



Betty Sharp circa 1975 with pinecone Christmas tree. (Photo courtesy of Betty Sharp).

Betty: One.

Rob: One.

Betty: 2,947 pinecones. Haha.

Rob: Haha...wow. and who did you sell it to?

Betty: I didn't. I kept it in the shop.

Rob: What became of it?

Betty: Well, finally went to pot, I mean just before I moved I mean it was getting bad and the lights weren't working no more.

Rob: So it has a wooden - sort of wooden trellis.

Betty: Yeah. My dad made that for me. And I mean (indiscernible) I made it.

Rob: And you just went out in the woods and collected pinecones?

Betty: Yeah, I mean and we would drive all over, Clarence and I, we would go all over. On our vacations we always had extra bags with us. Brought home pinecones. That's one. And then I even made Time Life Encyclopedia. They wanted me to make animals.

Rob: So describe - describe these to me. What are these made out of?

Betty: Well, they came to me with a picture and they - they wanted to have somebody that could do pinecone crafts and a lady in Newton did it and she called me and 'could I make a lion?' She showed me a picture of it and a lamb and an alligator or crocodile whatever you want to call it. And I mean how I made them and how I put them together.

Rob: So,

Betty: An ostrich.

Rob: So it's made almost entirely out of the pinecones?

Betty: Pinecones, yeah.

Rob: What - what's the white material?

Betty: White yarn.

Rob: White yarn. And uh...

Betty: For the sheep.

Rob: And then you would paint.

Betty: Well I spray painted the pinecone white first and then I put the yarn through it.

Rob: Mmhhh.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: And how many different kinds of animals did you make out of pinecones?

Betty: Well they were the only ones I made but then I made raccoons and I made poodles.

Rob: We used to have some of your raccoons.

Betty: Yeah, I madeI made a lot of things out of pinecones.

Rob: And they were made out pinecones plus um some uh...

Betty: Teasel

Rob: Teasel exactly.

Betty: And that was on the farm.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: And then I made a great big eagle. My mother-in-law she kept on saying, "gee whiz you ought to do an eagle, you ought to do an eagle" she says, "that would be pretty". So I kept seeing little pictures and finally I saw a halfway dec....I bought a fr... one at a rummage sale I think for a dime. It was a foam one. He was all faded but it was the eagle so my husband went and cut out a masonite and I went and did it and I have it in my bedroom. I made quite a few of them and sold them.

Rob: So Christmas was your big time?

Betty: Oh yeah.

Rob: But the store was open all year round?

Betty: All year yeah, then they wanted me to make miniatures so I made a lot of stuff out of pinecones.

Rob: What became your best seller would you say?

Betty: Well for a long time I used to make plaques that were like a weed arrangement. A little bouquet but it was all weeds.

Rob: And it would hang on a wall?

Betty: Yeah. Yeah, I have one of them in the bedroom yet. I kept one.

Rob: So were you always handy or was this something that in some way struck you?

Betty: To me this was a God given talent. I had no education into it. I just loved playing with it and by playing with it something happened.

Rob: Mmmhmm. Well with the jellies that must have been almost a full time job.

Betty: Yeah, a lot but I mean um there again my mother canned - I canned and my mother-in-law she canned. It's something I've always done and I just didn't wear of it.

Rob: Did you ever get letters from people across the country saying we had some of your jam and it was...

Betty: I've had to ship it as far as California and I sent to it to Oregon and I mean ... they went in different places.

Rob: That must feel pretty good.

Betty: Yeah, yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: But uh, and then I would give them \$.50 back if they brought the jar back because I was always buying jars and this way I got the jars back. Yeah.

Rob: Ummhmm. And did this last until you moved out of the house?

Betty: 'Til my husband died. I mean I did it for two years after he died but then it was getting too much 'cause the last five or six years he was like semi-retired. He took care of the garden completely. Well, he helped me a lot but I mean when he retired he planted and he took care of it. He says, "well tomorrow you'll be canning beans". And I'd come up - get up in the morning I'd have a bushel of beans setting there you know getting ready - get 'em ready. But uh after he died then of course I had to mow the lawn and I had to do everything you know and just - it was just too much.

Rob: When did he die?

Betty: Well it was eight years ago October 26, 2002. So I mean uh, but yet he - he mowed the lawn until the week before he died I mean you know but he had cancer bad.

Rob: Mmmm.

Betty: So...

Rob: How old was he when he passed away?

Betty: (Sigh) 77, 78 well Donald is 85 now was...and so Clarence would be uh 87 'cause he was a year and a half younger Donald was. He was four years older than I was but I mean ... and then of course I mean in the winter when he didn't have masonry work he would plow. He says, "as

long I can make enough to pay for the oil bill" and then he said, "and keep the truck repaired that's all I care". And it worked.

Rob: Did your craft and jelly business help quite a bit with the family finances?

Betty: Well a little bit I mean it - it just gave a little cushion you know and there - of course there was always canned stuff down in the cellar you know what I mean uh...

Rob: Mmm.

Betty: And I liked peaches. You know I always made so many. They don't get sold. They're mine. (Indiscernible) ..different kind. They were mine so we had enough for the winter. And tomatoes, I canned a lot of tomatoes 'cause I made my own sauce. I, you know, you just - in the summer time okay I'd go out and I'd pull carrots or I'd get corn or whatever was fresh and that's what we would have for supper. I mean it...

Rob: Mmmhmm. So you rarely had to buy groceries at the supermarket other than staples?

Betty: Fresh stuff - fresh stuff I mean in the winter time you only had to buy salad makings.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: But in the summer I mean I had all that out in the garden.

Rob: So when you first moved to Stillwater was the grist mill still operating?

Betty: At times they just did it though. Not really, I mean it... They did uh - they made a movie of it with Elsie and Gus and that's about all. They just did it to show it and they kept it in repair and so you know.

Rob: What about before that? Did you know Jane McCord?

Betty: No.

Rob: She was the previous owner.

Betty: Well, I knew that name but I didn't know her no, no. But um, Elsie and Gus and then Willie Klem they kept the mill in repair.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: So this way I mean it's still down in Stillwater Township. I guess well the taxpayers own it now but anyway uh it's still kept up and taken care of so.

Rob: Has Stillwater changed a lot since you moved here?

Betty: Stillwater is basically the same I think.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: It's a quiet little town...I mean it hasn't had that many new people come in. I mean you might change owners of houses but I mean nothing new has really been built. When we came to Stillwater they didn't have no bank. Um, Debbie Roof's house was the last house in there. That was next to...the cemetery was Kilmer's and then Pifer built the house next to 'em, and I mean then um a couple houses there in town they were only one I think and then they just built around it right there in that section that was it.

Rob: It was the type of town where you knew many of the people?

Betty: Yeah, you knew everybody in town. I mean when you took the kids to school you knew every every child every parent. Yeah.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Yeah, and like my Jeannie was saying with the yellow stone house I mean um Bobbie was... he and Clarence they would go Indian arrowhead hunting and so Bob says, he says, "gee with an old house like this there should be something". Well, when they put the septic system they found a lot of old laudanum bottles and things.

Rob: Mmm.

Betty: And he says, "well, I betcha there's some in the house". And I said, "naah, not in the house because the house has been pretty well cleaned up". So I don't know, we went up in the attic and he found a laudanum bottle in the attic, couple old inkwells so I mean there's a lot of stuff in that town.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: And what was laudanum?

Betty: Dope. I think if you were real sick I think doctors gave it to you.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: You used to see it in the wild west shows on television. But uh, we had the bottles and then of course some of the bottles were even Deckertown which is Sussex.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: So I mean they were old old bottles.

Rob: And you said that your uh, your kids found arrowheads in the fields by...?

Betty: Yeah, as soon as a field got plowed Clarence and Bob they would be going walking the fields looking for arrowheads.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: And they found some nice ones too.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: They knew what fields would have them too and they kind of watched for it yeah.

Rob: Now these were the fields that Donald...

Betty: They found some on Donald's but not too many. But then - now if you got closer to the river and if you got where there were some stone caves and things and then I mean that's where they would find them.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: But they knew where to go. They would go out for an afternoon. First thing you know they'd come back, "oh look what we found". You know it's oh yeah.

Rob: You mentioned earlier that you were from Holland...

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: ...as a little girl. Uh, did you ever go back?

Betty: Twice.

Rob: Tell me about those trips.

Betty: I went back '79 and '82.

Rob: So that was a long time after you had been here.

Betty: Yeah, yeah but I mean, my aunt had come here. My dad's sister. And my husband said, "well you ought to be able to go - you should go to Holland 'cause you got all family there". And I mean, my mother had three sisters. My dad there was seven boys and two girls. Cousins till they came out of the woodwork and I mean when I went over there I didn't know I had that many relatives and between... Arum was one town and my dad's town where he lived was Kinset [Kimsward] which is three miles away.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: And I mean I think everybody in those two towns was related.

Rob: You hadn't kept in touch with these cousins and aunts and uncles?

Betty: I've got about 15 cards I've got to send to Holland.

Rob: I don't mean now but I mean as a - as a young adult.

Betty: Um, my mother kept in touch and I would write to a couple of the cousins. In fact when I got there they showed me some of the letters. And um...

Rob: So what was it like going over there for the first time as an adult and meeting all these new relatives?

Betty: It was wonderful. It was wonderful, I mean, my aunt was there with me and they started talking to me and she said, "I'll have to translate for you". I had not heard the Dutch language in over 18 years. And they started talking to me and first thing I started answering and my aunt looked at me and she says, "you know what they're saying?" and I said, "yeah, but I can't talk it". So they would ask me questions and I would answer them all right. "Oh," she said, "I only have to translate one way".

Rob: So you answered in English, but you knew what they were saying?

Betty: Yeah, yup, but now the cousins my age, they would answer me in English because in school they had to learn it.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: I mean but, it was nice - and of course the windmills and oh, I mean oh.

Rob: You have a - a fascination with windmills I see in your house a lot of...

Betty: Blue delft, yeah.

Rob: ...ceramic ones and pictures of windmills and plates.

Betty: And we got tiles in the kitchen and all over.

Rob: They all look like they're Dutch windmills.

Betty: Oh yeah, they all came from Holland.

Rob: Did you see many when you were over there?

Betty: Oh yes, and they made sure I went to see them too.

Rob: Uh huh.

Betty: And uh, the second time we went, my daughter and I, we took uh three or four days... We spent a week with the family and then three or four days we went to Amsterdam and we took tours where we saw the flowers, the windmills and different things. Oh, I mean, I love the windmills. If I could, I'd have had one of those here.

Rob: Haha. Did they make a lot of noise as they...

Betty: No.

Rob: ...moved around.

Betty: But when we were there that one time...they decorate them so pretty. I mean, everything is full and there was going to be a wedding and all the flags were all around and that's how they say, "okay there's going to be a wedding". And it even told the day, the time, everything whatever the flags were you know. And the same thing with a funeral oh, I mean. I mean everything is so nice there.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: And clean.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Did you have any regrets that your parents moved here?

Betty: No, I'm very happy here. In fact I'm very happy here in Newton. I didn't think I would be after living in Stillwater but I mean I've got some nice friends here. I'm in Newton but yet I'm not in Newton I mean ... you know.

Rob: Well what I mean is do you have any regrets that your parents came to America?

Betty: No.

Rob: You said that Holland was so nice.

Betty: No, no. I often wished that maybe I had grown up there with my cousins 'cause I had nobody here except my brother. He was five years younger and he might as well be in Holland. He's in Utah.

Rob: Oh.

Betty: So I mean that's the only real blood relative I have of my age and...

Rob: What's his name?

Betty: Fred. And uh, Thiokol And that was - that was...

Rob: Thiokol? Ok.

Betty: with the shuttle business. And he had 28 engineers working under him working on the booster. ¹

Rob: Uh huh. Right.

Betty: He's retired now. Yeah.

Rob: Uh huh. But he still lives out there.

Betty: He still lives out in Utah and his one son's there and the other son is out in California. And his daughter is in Florida so they're scattered but I do see the daughter once in a while and I mean she's always calling me so uh yeah. But I mean I had the three kids and of course Jeanne is right here in Paulinskill Lake with Ron and Trina is in south Jersey. It's about five miles from Atlantic City. Bob's in Oakridge.

Rob: Oakridge, Tennessee?

Betty: No, Jersey.

Rob: Oh, ok.

Betty: Oak, Oak - no wait a minute, it's not Oakridge - Oak. Now you've got me confused but anyway he's down there and then uh they have no children. The only one that had children was the oldest girl. So I have two grandchildren. They're down in south Jersey too. No great grandchildren yet.

Rob: I see that you have a cat named Buddy here. Did you have a lot of animals when you lived at the stone house?

Betty: We always had at least a dog and two cats. Always.

Rob: You always loved animals?

Betty: Oh, yeah, yeah. And, Bob, he brought home a baby raccoon once and we built a cage for that. And even after he released it - after a while he would come to the kitchen door and he would want a - he knew we had bananas and he loved bananas.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: He'd eat then and he'd disappear again.

Rob: And how long did you have the raccoon?

Betty: I bet he had him in the cage for about six months but then then we had - Clarence said, "you got to let him loose", he said, "he's not meant to be tied". And, but every night he'd come to the

¹ Thiokol Corporation in Brigham City, Utah constructed the space shuttle boosters.

kitchen and Clarence would say, "he's back there, you better give him another banana". And he'd sit right there and eat the banana and then he'd, he'd disappear.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: And were the - the cats you had good mousers?

Betty: Oh yeah, but they didn't eat 'em. They would bring them to the door and say, "look what I've got" but they wouldn't eat 'em.

Rob: Was the - the house uh being stone -were there a lot of ways that mice and other critters got in?

Betty: Well, there were in the beginning - there were mice but then as they did the kitchen over and different things over things got sealed. And I mean they made sure when Clarence plastered the stone walls outside the stone house it all got...so we never had too many after a while. The first couple of years yes but not after that no.

Rob: Mmmhmm. And you didn't have any cows or horses...

Betty: No, no...

Rob: ...yourself.

Betty: ...my brother-in-law had them and Clarence he would work as a mason all day. Then at night he'd come home and he'd plow the fields for Donald or he would cut hay or something to help Donald out. You know, that way they got the crops in together.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: So, yeah.

Rob: Um, when it snowed heavily were you sort of trapped there or did you have...?

Betty: Well Clarence had a plow - a truck and he had to put a plow on it. And but a couple of times it got so deep that you couldn't go up the road that they had to go through the field.

Rob: How long was - it - your house was quite a ways from the road?

Betty: 2/10 of a mile.

Rob: 2/10 of a mile from the road.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: And it was a dirt road right?

Betty: Yeah, and I mean that - that just seemed to fill in. And I mean when it was really snowing then Clarence would go up every couple of hours to keep it open.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: But then in the beginning, well, you didn't know it and then the first thing you know it got so blocked that you couldn't do it and we had to have somebody else come in to clean it out.

Rob: So he had a truck for that or...?

Betty: Oh yeah, yeah. Well see had a mason so you had a ... one time he even had a dump truck so I mean he always had a good truck that he could plow with.

Rob: Uh, huh.

Betty: Then he plowed for several other people. Must have been about 20 different driveways he did.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: As a mason, uh Clarence was a - like an independent contractor?

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: And he was hired out for various jobs all around? Ummm....

Betty: Yep, yeah. Little jobs, repair jobs, a foundation. The lot of things but he did a lot of fireplaces. He loved fireplaces.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Anything with stone. That was his - that was the thing he liked the best.

Rob: Hmm. Did he redo the - the fireplace in - in the Wintermute house?

Betty: Stone house, yes. And then I mean the brickwork on the church and the Sunday School down - The Presbyterian Church, Clarence did that.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: And then one of the last jobs he did the stone wall by the stairs it was starting to go. Him and Lawrence they repaired it. It was one of the last jobs he did before he passed away.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: So he did it right to the end.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: Yeah, so.

Rob: Um, you were showing me some crafts that you're still doing a little bit.

Betty: Catnip mice.

Rob: Making uh catnip toys for ...

Betty: Neighbors kitty cats. Yeah, yeah I grow my own catnip. My Jeanne grows catnip and then I dry it and then I make the mice and uh they love 'em so yeah.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Yeah. Then like I said, I - I made that big eagle and of course I had wall plaques. Oh, I've made so many things but I love doing it.

Rob: Did you spend - when you were doing the crafts was it... seems like it was an all day affair?

Betty: Well, during the day you'd be busy with different things but at night well, we'd be watching television and I'd have a table there and I'd be making little , little - little things and I mean um, I would work a step on the plaques or a step on something and then let them dry overnight and then do work on little things. My husband would always say, "I can always tell when a television show gets interesting - the hands stop". And after he went to bed because he always went to bed by 9:00 then I always made at least two batches of jelly at night.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: And that's when I would get five or six, well at least three batches of pickles in July or August ready and have them brining overnight and get them ready for the next day, yeah.

Rob: What was your favorite jelly?

Betty: Favorite one? Strawberry-rhubarb I think is one of the first. And there's a four berry-- strawberry, blueberry, blackberry and raspberry.

Rob: Were those big sellers?

Betty: Yes, they were.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah, yeah and of course the bread and butter pickles I made oh, those I had to make an awful lot of. They went real well.

Rob: What about hot peppers? Did you grow those?

Betty: No, I didn't do too much with that. I would put them in salsa but I didn't do anything with peppers.

Rob: So you made salsa and sold it -sold it?

Betty: Yeah, yeah. And I mean all my canning supplies - I mean the big kettles are all in church and a couple neighbors that were going to start canning I gave them my kettles so this way everything is hopefully somebody's using it. I know the big pots in the church - they're still using it 'cause they're the big soup kettles ... so yeah.

Rob: Well do you...

Betty: And of course I was very involved in the church while I was there.

Rob: Tell me about that. What kind of uh....

Betty: I was a Sunday School teacher. Well Elsie Roy started me off when the kids were there. She said, "can you be a Sunday School teacher substitute?" I said, "yeah". So I ended up being a Sunday school teacher for about eight years, a superintendent for six. I was a deacon for three, six, twelve years.

Rob: This is at the Presbyterian Church in Stillwater?

Betty: Yeah, and I was an elder for 12 years. And I was Clerk of Session for 16 years.

Rob: What is Clerk of Session?

Betty: You took care of the minutes and all of the things that were going on at different minutes - meetings - and you had to take all the minutes.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: So I did that for 16 years. And then I was president of the Presbyterian Women. The rummage sale - the town garage sale I was in charge of that for 30 years.

Rob: Hmm.

Betty: That was a biggie. People liked that.

Rob: Yeah, that still goes on every summer.

Betty: No, not like it used to.

Rob: Not like it used to?

Betty: I mean uh, a couple other organizations are trying it. I don't know but they don't get the flea market people. They just have a few garage sales.

Rob: And you still attend church in Stillwater?

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: Yeah. No, I been there so long, it's just like a second family. You know everybody. Well, a lot of new people but all the older ones I mean I've known since I've been there. You know like Elsie Roof and Priscilla Kendall, Lawrence Earl. I mean, they've been there for years and you just know them. Lawrence, he just fell and broke his hip.

Rob: Oh, I didn't know that.

Betty: Yeah. He's in Bristol Glen about two weeks ago.

Rob: Uh, huh.

Betty: But he's doing good.

Rob: Good.

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: Well do you have uh - anything else that you want to add to the conversation?

Betty: Well, I don't know but I mean Jeannie mentioned down in the cellar in the furnace room. Where the furnace - um there was a spring with a stone covering it and every time it went to flood that's where the water would come up and I mean we knew when we - we had another hole - then we put a five gallon paint can in and we had a sump pump in that so as soon as that came in then had everything ready to start pumping water out.

Rob: So that's where your water supply came from too?

Betty: No, I mean we had a well outside that was only 14 foot deep.

Rob: Oh.

Betty: Oh, I had the best water. Oh. So when I came here and of course Newton water has chlorine in it.

Rob: Mmmhmm. Took a lot to get used to.

Betty: The cat wouldn't - well, my other cat wouldn't even drink it. He was so used to well water so he gets Poland Spring water.

Rob: Hahaha.

Betty: Oh yeah, but uh I mean uh, I don't drink it either. I buy just bottled water. After having good well water for years - your whole life really.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Yeah, so yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Betty: The only time you didn't drink it is like if you had those hurricanes and flooding then you'd have ground water in it. It was still good yet but you just boiled it and put it in the refrigerator for a few days.

Rob: Now you lived really close to the river, uh, did you do a lot of swimming in the river?

Betty: No, uh the kids did. And the second brook was sandy. There was two brooks and uh, but the first one there was quite of a deep hole and that's where they ... what do you call it the guy that stocked the fish. They would dump in that hole right in that area and we had in the spring we had all of the fisherman would come down.

Rob: Mmm. Mmmhmm. And did Clarence fish quite a bit?

Betty: No, he never cared for fishing, he like hunting.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: But Bob he liked fishing. And he would catch 'em you know and oh, and then he would grill them out on the grill. I mean I didn't care for them, but he did. 'Cause the fellow that taught him how to fish he said, "well if you're going to fish you have to learn how to clean them and how to eat them". And I mean he did. And I mean I guess 'til this day yet he still does the same thing. So, yeah, it's good meat it's just I never cared for it.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: Venison too. He used to get that and then do it on the grill and like that too, but it's a dry meat.

Rob: Mmmhmm. You have to season it with...

Betty: Yeah.

Rob: ...Italian dressing or something like that.

Betty: Yeah and I mean if you have a roast you have to put a couple slices of bacon on it and then make sure to throw some juice in it.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Betty: But it's still good meat. Yeah.

Rob: Well I want to thank you very much for participating in this oral history program.

Betty: Thank you for asking me.

Rob: Well, it's my pleasure.

Betty: Don't know if I'm any help or not but...but I did, I loved Stillwater. I mean it's a beautiful town to raise your kids. You didn't have to worry about them. They could walk to school. They even went to Swartswood to go swimming. Today I don't know if you could do it or not but when we were there it was beautiful.

Rob: Mmm.

Betty: Yeah.