

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Gus Roof
with insight from his wife Elsie Roof

June 21, 2008



Interview conducted by Rob Jacoby with assistance given by Jan Wiley
Photograph by Rob Jacoby

Transcribed by Maureen Block

Rob Jacoby: Today is June 21, 2008 and we are talking today with Gus Roof at his home in Stillwater, New Jersey. My name is Rob Jacoby and I'm with...

Jan Wiley: Jan Wiley.

Rob: and Gus' wife...

Elsie Roof: Elsie.

Rob: Gus why don't you tell me what year you were born and where you were born.

Gus Roof: Born right in this house, August the 13th 1917.

Rob: That makes you 91.

Jan: Well, almost, don't rush things.

Rob: How many generations of your family lived in this house?

Elsie: That live here now?

Rob: No, in the past.

Elsie: Oh, Grandfather Roof and Pop Roof and Gus and I and our kids – that would be 4 generations.

Rob: Was your family always farmers?

Gus: As far as I know back, yeah.

Rob: What's your first memory of the farm?

Elsie: I know, when the barn burned.

Gus: Oh yeah, I can remember that when the barn burned. That's all I remember is my mother holding me up here and seeing the fire out there.

Jan: How old were you?

Gus: Well, it burned in 1919, I was born in 1917 – I was only 2 years old. I remember seeing that big thing whatever it was.

Rob: The barn went totally up?

Gus: Yes, this is the 3rd barn that's been up here – they all burned up.

Jan: Were there any animals in it?

Gus: No, they got em all out.

Jan: Okay, I worry about things like that.

Gus: I don't know about the first one when the Shafer's had it.

Rob: Who rebuilt the barn?

Gus: My father did most of it. Roy Rosenkrans lived across the road. He was a carpenter, anyway, they worked together.

Rob: And, did neighbors help out?

Gus: I would assume so – I don't know.

Rob: How old were you when you first worked on the farm?

Gus: Depends on what you were doing. Used to get the eggs when you were ().

Rob: So, you started out as a little kid doing chores?

Gus: Yeah, oh yeah, you always had something to do.

Rob: What were some of your chores?

Gus: Well, getting the eggs, taking care of the chickens, maybe feeding the calves and stuff in the barn, giving them hay

Rob: Do you remember when you saw your 1st car?

Gus: I can't remember that – I remember horses- when they were grading the road out here the horses were pulling the wagons.

Rob: When you were a little kid did most people still have horses or already cars?

Gus: There were very few cars – there were some cars but hardly any trucks – mostly just cars – Model-T's

Elsie: Dr. Landis was the 1st one that had a car wasn't he?

Gus: hm?

Elsie: Dr. Landis was the 1st one that had a car.

Gus: Yeah, he was the old doctor down here.

Elsie: There's a lot of stuff about him up there in the museum.

Gus: In the wintertime he would come up and get my father's horses (). My father didn't like that because he'd run the horses to death. Old Doc didn't have any patience for the horses. He didn't take care of them. He just let 'em go. This was after his own horse got so tired he couldn't do it.

Rob: Did you ride the horse?

Gus: Not much, no. Once in a while- they were work horses. Of course they had to

work. Used to ride them when we go to the fields. Of course then all the kids around town I used to take them for rides when I was driving the horses over the field. We never rode 'em much.

Rob: Do you ever remember big snowstorms where it was so high you couldn't go anywhere?

Gus: Yeah, they was pretty good with plowing the snow since I can remember. I remember them plowing with horses. Dennis' down here had a team they had a snowplow pulled by horses but the cars would run up and down anyhow. Of course Model T's with their narrow tires and high wheels they get through the snow better than the new cars.

Rob: When did your father get a car?

Gus: I think it was 1923. I believe, I'm not sure about that. Ed Westbrook had a dealership over there. He sold foreign cars.

Rob: So your father bought a Model-T?

Gus: Yeah.

Rob: Do you know what he paid?

Gus: No, I have no idea.

Elsie: We didn't pay much for our first car.

Gus: I would guess it wasn't much over \$200-300. That was a lot of money in those days.

Rob: Tell us something about going to school-where was your school?

Gus: This one-room school down near the manse.

Rob: What's now the Historical Society?

Gus: No.

Elsie: The one on the other side of the manse..there's one....

Gus: My father went where the Historical Society is – my father went to school there – I went in the house on the other side of the manse.

Jan: Two doors down from the museum when you turn onto Maple Ave.

Elsie: Yeah, exactly.

Rob: Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

Gus: Oh yeah – about 30 kids – one teacher.

Rob: Do you remember the teacher's name?

Gus: Dr. Dallon, he was a minister up here too.

Elsie: He was a minister and a teacher and he was a ...

Gus: justice of the peace.

Jan: A little bit of everything.

Rob: Was he strict?

Gus: Well, at times – he was kind of off and on.

Elsie: You want to hear – too bad Harold Garris wasn't here and you could hear what he thought about him. He was a captain – they called him cappy, but they also called him Dr. Dallon. He was a captain in the service. I always remember Gus and Carl and the ones who went to school down there how they would get him talking about the war and then the lessons would go – didn't learn very much from him although I think he did a pretty good job.

Jan: Was it all the grades – all the way up through high school?

Gus: Yeah.

Elsie: No, not here - Not for you – it was for Pop – you went to High School in Newton.

Gus: I misunderstood you.

Rob: What did you do in the summertime when school wasn't in session?

Gus: Well, when there wasn't much work we went swimming down here in the Kill all such like that course() big enough to do much so he had to drive the horses - cause most of the work was done with horses then – kids would always drive the horses in.

Rob: Did you have brothers/sisters?

Gus: One brother, he was older than I was – 2 years.

Rob: Did you play with him much?

Gus: Not too much – somewhat but course there was always lots of kids in town back then. I don't know why there's not many around town anymore. There were a lot of kids around town here.

Rob: Did you play baseball?

Gus: Oh, yeah.

Rob: Where would you play?

Gus: We started down on the school ground down there but later on we used to play out here in the field after we took the hay off.

Elsie: Used to play mumbly peg?)

Gus: Baseball fields weren't groomed in those days.

Rob: Yeah, it was just a field.

Gus: Get your nose out of the way or you get one grounder would hop up and slap you in the face.

Jan: Phillip's the same.

Rob: Would you play with mitts – with gloves?

Gus: Oh, yeah we had gloves.

(Undistinguished conversation in background between Jan and Elsie.)

Rob: Describe what you're looking at – Jan – describe what you're looking at.

Jan: Oh, I'm sorry this is what class – what year is this or is this the whole school?

Elsie: 1926 I think.

Jan: It is a picture of all the children in the class?

Elsie: In the whole school.

Jan: In the whole school – so Gus is here and his brother Carl is here.

Elsie: Harold Garris.

Jan: and Harold Garris is here who else?

Elsie: Ruth Catterman – Ruth Earl – Lawrence was younger.

Jan: Oh really?

Elsie: Yeah.

Jan: This was '26 – that's the year before my mother was born

Gus: Lawrence isn't in that is he?

Elsie: No, Lawrence isn't in there.

Gus: Oh, he's younger.

Rob: You're talking about Lawrence Earl.

Elsie: His sister is in it but not him.

Jan: Oh, here's the picture of the academy – here's the museum building.

Rob: So tell me something about the farm – how many cows did your father have?

Gus: 25 or 30 usually.

Rob: And this was a dairy operation?

Gus: Dairy farm yeah there was all dairy farms around here.

Rob: So what did you grow to feed the cows?

Gus: We would always grow hay naturally but then you had oats and corn and wheat for the chickens.

Rob: Really?

Jan: You feed the chickens the wheat kernels is that what they ate like seed.

Gus: Yeah, oh yeah the corn you took down here to the mill and had it ground up.

Jan: Yeah and flour.

Rob: Was the mill going all the time – do you remember hearing it?

Gus: Oh yeah, you couldn't hear it from here but they run it all the time – Mrs. McCord ran it – she run it all by herself.

(Indistinct comment Elsie?)

Jan: She was quite a tough lady that one – I saw a picture from a newspaper of her and she looked like she could run that mill all by herself.

Gus: Oh yeah.

Rob: How many stores were in town?

Gus: There was always two sometimes three – the one next door here was always a grocery store and the post office up there was a grocery store.

Rob: And could you get just about anything you needed there?

Gus: Most things that you get – meat was delivered they came around and delivered that and bread – the baker come every – things you can't get now you got to go get it.

(Indistinct conversation)

Rob: What about ice- did someone deliver ice?

Gus: They sold ice over here at the store but we always had to fill the icehouse to cool the milk.

Rob: So you cut in the kill or the lake?

Gus: Oh no, Kill no unless its real cold the Kill wouldn't freeze over down by Bonny Brook - you know where Bonny Brook is?

Rob: Uh-huh.

Gus: We used to get it in there -one year 20 inches thick – that was a cold winter.

Jan: Yeah.

Gus: It was hard to handle though – cause you cut it 20 inches square so you just had a cube.

Rob: Yeah.

Jan: And they're heavy.

Rob: Heavy and cold.

Jan: And slippery.

Rob: Would ice last all summer?

Gus: Almost, you used the water that melted from the ice – had a box at the bottom of the ice house – water would run down through and come out at the bottom in that box and you set the milk in that a concrete box.

Rob: Now did you put milk in bottles?

Gus: Cans.

Rob: You sold it in cans and did it go out on railroad?

Gus: Well took it on the creamery rock ridge right over here.

Jan: Where was that located?

Gus: It burned up it's - are you really familiar with – where it crosses...

Jan: The Stillwater Station.

Elsie: Well that's where the creamery was.

Jan: Up cedar ridge?

Gus: No.

Jan: Station Road.

Gus: Yeah.

Rob: On the track.

Gus: Obviously that's why the reason its called Station Road.

Jan: Silly me.

Rob: How many gallons did the farm generate did you sell?

Gus: Well it varies from season to season depends on how many cows you got bred at the same time used to have 5 or 6 cans each day 40 gal - 40quarts.

Rob: 40 quarts in a can and you had 5 or so,

Gus: 4 or 5 yeah.

Jan: Wow.

Gus: Some people had more some had less.

Elsie: We sold milk well even after we got married we were selling milk the raw milk people would come with their pails we'd fill it from down here.

Rob: What kind of cows did you have?

Gus: In the beginning we had Holsteins but then when they decided to test them for tuberculosis lost a whole herd took them all out so then my father got Hershires.

Rob: Were they better producers?

Gus: For butter fat – ()these days.

Rob: How many people worked the farm – your father, your brother, were there.

Gus: Well we were little kids then we always had a hired man.

Rob: One?

Gus: Just one, yeah.

Rob: What was his name?

Gus: Boots Kitchen – Maynard Kitchen we always called him Boots.

Jan: Why?

Gus: I don't know he was working here before I was here - he'd quit a while and then he would come back again.

Elsie: 'cause he lived here too.

Jan: Oh, okay.

Rob: He lived in town or did he live in the house?

Gus: Oh no, he boarded there – he was a hired man, oh yeah.

Rob: In the house or in the barn?

Gus: No, in the house, oh yeah, he had a room upstairs.

Rob: How old a man was he?

Gus: Well he was here quite a while – he was about the same age as my father probably in his late 40's early 50's.

Rob: Did you start working on the farm full time after high school?

Gus: Yeah then we didn't have a hired man – I was the hired man.

Elsie: His brother went to work in Newton before he went into the service and Gus had to stay home because they had to keep the farm going - Carl went to...he was drafted. Was he drafted or did he enlist – did Carl enlist?

Gus: I don't know I think he was drafted.

Elsie: Yeah, I think he was too.

Rob: Did he go overseas?

Gus: Yeah, he was in England all the while he was in there –

Jan: Really?

Gus: Never got home - he was over there almost 3 years.

Jan: Wow!

Elsie: Married an English girl and brought her over.

Rob: Ah.

Jan: That happened a lot.

Gus: Oh yeah.

Rob: And how old was your father when he – until he stopped working day to day?

Elsie: I don't know 50-60, about 60, 50-60 somewhere around there.

Gus: I was gonna say must've been about 50 or 60. He had asthma quite bad.

Jan: Oh, well doing all the hay and everything will do that to you or if you work in

the mill. Did he work in the mill or he just worked on the farm?

Gus: Just on the farm.

Jan: 'Cause the mill all the dust.

Gus: My brother worked for Mrs. McCord for a while.

Jan: Oh really?

Rob: Tell me something about your mother – where was she from?

Gus: Marksboro.

Rob: What do you remember best about her?

Gus: Everything good I guess.

Elsie: Well she got up in the morning and she worked and then....

Gus: Oh yeah, I remember her going down to help milk the cows – my grandmother used to help milk the cows when I was a kid.

Elsie: His grandmother lived here too.

Jan: How long did it take you to milk all the cows? - How long did it take to milk the cows? –without electric without you know – if you're just doing it by hand I would think it would take a while.

Gus: Couple hours maybe.

Jan: For all 5.

Rob: There were 25.

Jan: Oh 25, so it would take how long for each cow?

Gus: Some cows were a lot easier than others.

Elsie: They wouldn't let their milk down some...

Gus: Some of them the milk would come out more readily – kind of hard to say about that – that's a hard question.

Jan: I'm sorry I am always interested in things like this.

Rob: Did the family grow vegetables?

Gus: Oh yeah, we always had a big garden.

Rob: And who took care of that mostly?

Gus: My mother mostly.

Rob: And did she put up vegetables?

Gus: Oh sure, there was canning.

Rob: Do you remember any July 4th celebrations in town, was that a big thing?

Gus: Fairly big Dennis' down here at Bonny Brook they owned that and they always supplied the church with fireworks – had a big show up here every 4th of July.

Rob: Did people get together pretty often to uh, I don't know, to have parties or dinners together?

Gus: Some but when you got a dairy you got to be back the whole time. We always had the harvest homes and stuff like that.

Jan: Picnics like Church picnics.

Gus: Church picnics, oh yeah – used to go up to High Point with the model-T.

Jan: Really?

Gus: There was a place down in Delaware Water Gap used to go down there quite often too.

Rob: What about hunting?

Gus: Oh yeah my father did a lot of hunting. I did too when I got older.

Rob: Was that an important part of the meat you ate?

Gus: Oh yeah we didn't buy any meat the whole during hunting season.

Elsie: But there weren't any deer down here – there weren't any deer – they were all up in the mountains and so they didn't get deer they were mostly rabbits and things like that.

Gus: Yeah, rabbits and squirrels and pheasants.

Rob: How many squirrels did it take to feed a family of 4 or 5?

Gus: Oh a couple – quite a lot of meat on them.

Jan: Really?

Gus: They don't have much of a bone structure like some things.

Rob: Uh-huh.

Elsie: Yeah they are very tiny bitty things – tiny little bones rabbits are a little bit...

Gus: There was no deer around here until Worthington had a big area fenced in down in the mountain down there and he brought deer in and put 'em in there when he got a whole slew of them he turned 'em out and that's the first deer come here I was grown up before I saw a deer you never saw a deer around here.

Elsie: Never saw a bear either.

Gus: Now they're a nuisance almost.

Jan: That's what I was doing - I was spraying my garden to keep them away.

Gus: I guess everybody hunting them for meat in those days - they got 'em all off.

Rob: Were hawks a big problem with your chickens?

Gus: Some, but not much.

Elsie: They are more of a problem now not with the chickens but we used to have Banties running around then we got some Guineas we can't keep anything outside at all any more because the fox get 'em all the time.

Rob: And do you see coyote now?

Elsie: We haven't. My son has he lives down the road he has seen them.

Gus: There weren't any coyotes around here while I was growing up they just been lately there's quite a flock of 'em over here across the Kill.

Jan: We had 'em up -I live up the mountain so I live up Old Tannery all up in there by the new Bear Swamp Reservoir that the state has and there's a lot of coyote.

Rob: Do you hear them at night?

Jan: Oh yeah, but they don't go in groups they are very individual but they come through our yard I have seen them through our yard – very interesting.

Gus: 'Course I don't hear well but my son says there's quite a flock of 'em over here coyotes he hears them over there at nights.

Rob: And would you hunt geese and other wild fowl?

Gus: Well geese never stopped here until lately now they are almost a nuisance.

Jan: A pain, yeah.

Gus: You would see them go over spring and fall they'd go back and forth – they never lived around here.

Elsie: Yeah it was kind of funny you'd hear them and you'd run out to see them and there'd be this big v.

Gus: They'd get in this big v but they never stopped here they'd went all north and then in the fall they went south.

Rob: Did it used to be much more open here?, is it more wooded today?

Gus: Oh yeah, well everybody had a garden now nobody keeps a garden much.

Elsie: Well and our fields across the Kill are all grown up there's only one big field that's not grown up the other the old cedar.

Rob: Where did you chop wood for the fireplace?

Gus: Well this fireplace wasn't here then but there was one we never used the fireplace.

Elsie: Where our other son lives he's got a wood lot over there about 16 acres.

Gus: East Stillwater we used to call it now its Wall Street I guess.

Jan: Oh, Okay.

Rob: How did you heat the house in the old days?

Gus: We used coal in the living room wood stove.

Rob: Was it one of your job one of your chores to stoke the coal furnace?

Gus: No the grownups didn't let the kids fool around. Had to carry the wood in though every night.

Jan: Keep a box up.

Elsie: They always had a cook stove in here and then the balloon stove in there with a pipe going up through his bedroom and that's what heated his bedroom.

Jan: Now how old is this stove? Is it still wood fired?

Elsie: We purchased that. The one we had that Pop and Mother had was a great big old black one and in the war – during the war we sold it for scrap and I just wish I had that one because I loved that stove.

Jan: It must've been cast iron then.

Elsie: Yeah big cast iron.

Rob: Now do you use this stove?

Elsie: Yeah.

Rob: On a daily basis.

Elsie: Yeah all winter long that's what heats this room.

Jan: And it's wonderful, I've been in here when it's on.

Rob: Gus why don't you tell us a bit about how you met Elsie?

Jan: I love this story.

Elsie: You want me to tell it?

Gus: I remember meeting you with Jeannette.

Elsie: Well, Gus played ball- he was a pitcher.

Gus: Oh yeah, I forgot about that.

Elsie: We used to go down – I came up in the summertime – I come from Brooklyn – well I come from overseas to begin with but I grew up in Brooklyn and we had a summer place up here so my girlfriend Jeannette who lived up here.

Jan: What was her last name?

Elsie: Nelson – and we always went to the ball games because he was going with Fran Riley and I was you know I don't know how it got started the first time I think we went roller-skating I think.

Gus: Roller-skating wasn't it?

Rob: And how old were you?

Elsie: Probably 24 –25.

Rob: And Elsie you were?

Elsie: Probably 19-20 when we first started going together.

Rob: Had you been out into the country much up to that point?

Elsie: Only during the summer – we would come up and spend the summer. My aunt wasn't working and she would come up and bring my cousin and my brother and I and we would spend the summer up here.

Rob: Coming from Brooklyn this must have seemed really far away?

Elsie: Well it took us 2 ½ hours to get from here to....

Jan: Still does.

Elsie: Pardon?

Jan: Still does.

Elsie: But then you didn't have the traffic –there wasn't route 10 and wasn't 80 of course so we came through Bloomfield and we came up 6 there were farms all over the place even all the way up and when 10 opened up we would kind of come over and get on 10 and come up.

Rob: When was the 1st time you were in a big city?

Elsie: You were there before I - you used to come down.

Gus: Oh yeah, when I was in high school - I took a course the agricultural course and the guy that – the teacher that had that. That was Newton High School, not where it is now but where the grammar school is now was the high school and he used to take class trips we went down to New York I remember once I don't know. I must have been a sophomore maybe a junior I guess quite a long time ago.

Elsie: Didn't you go to Washington – your class went to Washington too didn't it in high school?

Gus: That was in the end I graduated in 1934 so it must have been 34.

Rob: What did you think about New York City?

Gus: We pretty well knew what we were getting into. You know you read this stuff.

Jan: But it still must have seemed huge – from here to there with you know the concrete and buildings are still taller.

Gus: Of course you heard so much about it and everybody talking about it – everybody you're you're gonna see this – wasn't looking for anything great about it.

Rob: What about movies did you go, was there a movie house in Newton?

Gus: Yeah, Newton.

Jan: Was it the same one that's still there?

Gus: Yeah later on there was 2 there in Newton. One up where the jail is.

Jan: Really?

Gus: There was one there. Not where the jail itself was but right in that neighborhood we never went to the movies very often, once in a great while.

Elsie: Used to go to Newton with horse and buggy a few times though didn't you?

Gus: Oh yeah I remember going Newton to shop with the horse.

Rob: There was a bowling alley near the uh – right across from the green wasn't there?

Gus: Yeah there was one down on Water Street too that burned up.

Elsie: Yeah right where the courthouse – where the Cochran Plaza is - the bowling alley was there and across the road where the new building is that was the bucket of blood.

Rob: What's the bucket of blood?

Jan: The bucket of blood.

Elsie: Yeah that's they called it.

Gus: There was always fighting there. It was a real dump.

Rob: Was it a bar?

Elsie: It was a bar.

Gus: Yeah it was a bar.

Jan: It was a dive.

Elsie: It was called the bucket of blood.

Jan: It must have been a nice place.

Rob: Now you had a restaurant right across the street that had a bar what was that like?

Gus: This one right here.

Rob: Yeah, The Stillwater Inn.

Gus: Well during prohibition that was just a boarding house then.

Rob/Jan? Oh.

Rob: So it closed up?

Gus: Oh yeah, well they rented – had it divided it up so there was 3 or 4 apartments in there - that's a pretty good size building.

Rob: Did people have stills?

Gus: Oh yeah, they were all over. Sussex county sheriff got caught with one.

Jan: Oh, that's funny.

Rob: Do you remember buying some or drinking some?

Gus: No, never. I never drank.

Elsie: There was one over do you know where

Gus: Catalano's?

Elsie: Yeah, well, Catalano's we had a bar down the street it was a barber shop I remember my father going down for a haircut but they went down for something to drink because he always had stuff that was also during prohibition that was just before.

Gus: It was just a little house past Bischoff's block yard.

Elsie: The one that's right by the road that was a barbershop.

Jan: Okay.

Elsie: But in the back he served liquor – beer mostly he probably made it.

Jan: Probably.

Gus: Haircuts were a little cheaper then than they are nowadays 25 cents – for kids I don't know what they were for grown ups.

Rob: What did people think of Franklin Roosevelt around here?

Gus: My father was a Democrat and my mother both of them they thought he was alright I don't know.

Elsie: It was all Democrats around here at that time. There weren't any Republicans – very few Republicans.

Gus: It was just the opposite.

Rob: Oh.

Gus: Republicans couldn't get in the Democrats got in no matter what they were then it turned around the other way.

Jan: Yeah, I know.

Elsie: It will turn around again.

Jan: Oh I think so.

Rob: So President Roosevelt was pretty popular around here?

Gus: I think so, yeah.

Rob: Did it seem that The Depression hit here very hard or were times always hard?

Gus: Well it was quite hard around here but that's one thing about living on the farm you always had something to eat.

Jan: That's true.

Gus: I remember I was in high school about the height of that – I always had a little money but the rest of the kids never did.

Jan: Were there was there a lot of hunger or were the people – were there a lot of children who were hungry that went to school with you?

Gus: I don't know I don't remember too much about that – real details, there were some around of course everybody had a garden then and they raised stuff.

Jan: They made due.

Gus: We sold milk down here 10 cents a quart.

Rob: Did your father give you a small allowance for your chores or did you get change?

Gus: Yeah he'd just give us a few dollars every now and then I don't think there was any regularity to it.

Rob: What year did you marry Elsie?

Gus: 1945

Elsie: No, 42.

Gus: Oh, 42 yeah.

Rob: And where did you live when you got married?

Elsie: We went across the street to Whitehall and were caretakers over there because the Kilmers were some of them were still there.

Gus: Joyce Kilmer was a widow.

Elsie: They wanted somebody to live there – so we went over there and lived. It was a ramshackle of a place. A couple of the rooms – the ones we had the living room and the bedroom they were great – I mean they were the ones that Mrs. Kilmer put on but the plaster was coming off and then when you go into the other rooms – the one room was paneled you know and the kitchen was a cook stove Gus put in a cabinet – every place he had to put in a cabinet. And we lived there about 4 months that was our honeymoon suite.

Gus: When we got married my father just got appendicitis so we didn't get much of a honeymoon.

Elsie: But we went to Pennsylvania for one night and then came back home.

Rob: And where did you move after Whitehall?

Elsie: Up on Catfish Pond Road we were up there at Woodbrooks' place – the third house in.

Jan: Which is now Millbrook Road.

Elsie: Yeah, we lived there for about a year and then we came down and we lived in the Mill house a year or so and then my mother-in-law died and we moved up here. But my brother... my father... but there wasn't a bathroom in this house until you and me – I'm doing the talking. They couldn't make up their mind where they wanted to put the bathroom so they always used an outhouse and when Carl was bringing his bride home he didn't want to come home to a house without a bathroom in it so we took part of their bedroom downstairs and made it into a bathroom and that's all we have – I mean right there a very tiny little bathroom and that's and Carl and Stella lived on one side of the house and we lived in here with Pop and took care of Pop. And then they bought a place over in East Stillwater and then we moved in over there and Pop was here but he always ate with us and everything I took care of him.

Rob: So you have been in this house for 50 years about?

Elsie: At least 55- well we probably moved in when mother died in 46 so we've been here ever since so that's what?

Jan: That's 62 years.

Rob: Did it have electricity when you were a little kid?

Gus: I was still in grammar school I think when we got electric in Stillwater.

Jan: What about telephones?

Gus: Yeah they had them before they had electricity.

Elsie: They didn't have one there was one up the street because when my son was born and I was in labor Gus had to go up to the store and tell them at the store – call the doctor from there.

Jan: Oh my gracious.

Elsie: Because we didn't have a telephone and when we did get a telephone it was one of those crank things.

Jan: Like we have in the museum.

Elsie: And everybody in town was on the same line.

Jan: Oh, party lines.

Elsie: Yes and Elsie Roy was down the street and Elsie Roof was here and her line was 15 and mine was 5.

Jan: Uh-oh.

Gus: Talk to someone for an hour before they found out they had the wrong one.

Elsie: They'd say hello Elsie and you'd say yes and they'd go on talking oh I didn't really want you wrong Elsie.

Jan: Oh that's funny.

Rob: When did you get your first television?

Gus: Gee I don't know.

Elsie: When Al Striver.

Gus: Well I was gonna say Al but when was that?

Elsie: Al was getting rid of his – that's my cousin's husband – they were getting rid of their first one and we were – well Leon was due – it was after George was born.

Gus: Oh yeah, George was a little kid I guess.

Elsie: And George is 54 years old 55 so it's probably at least 55 years ago.

Rob: I don't expect reception was very good here.

Gus: No very poor here. No down in this hollow was bad you go up on the hill it was good.

Jan: See what this says no service [referring to cell phone].

Elsie: In this house.

Jan: You don't get service anywhere around the museum forget it I have to leave and go up.

Elsie: The other day – last Saturday, we had lightning strike – struck one of the trees out here.

Gus: Oh boy that was something.

Elsie: We didn't realize – we didn't even know it and then I went to make the biscuits and my oven was gone.

Rob: Oh.

Elsie: But this one worked so I did the biscuits in here 3 at a time but then I found out the telephone was gone and my computer is gone and its seven years old so I think I will just forget it at this point.

Gus: Struck a tree right out here where we keep the cars.

Rob: There were quite a few trees on Middleville Road that came down – the road was closed.

Jan: That was quite a storm.

Elsie: Yeah it's been -

Jan: It's been really rough.

Elsie: - we are having a lot of very close things. Leon was saying this morning – my son was here – he said he was sitting on his porch and he was watching the lightning and the lightning came down – he could see it come right down to the ground and he wondered and it was a real loud bang and it was down at Pine Brook they found out it hit down there.

Jan: Oh really?

Rob: You had 25 cows when you were a little kid how many cows today? How many cows do you have now?

Gus: I have beef cows now.

Rob: When did you change from all dairy to beef?

Elsie: We went from one thing to another we had horses for a while.

Rob: Well let me ask this – why did you change from dairy to beef?

Gus: Well we quit dairy all together and then we boarded horses for a while – more money less work.

Elsie: Tell them about the first time – we never could go anywhere because you always had to be back for milking. So there was a picnic and we were going to the picnic and we weren't going to be able to stay. So they were playing ball. They played with the Catholic Church. It was the Presbyterian Church against the Catholics.

Jan: Uh-oh.

Elsie: And he went to run and he pulled a hamstring and he rolled on the ground and we came home. That was the first time we could ever stay.

Jan: Oh, no.

Gus: That was the first time I'd ever done that – it was sore.

Jan: I know it's bad. I've done it before.

Elsie: 'cause he was the pitcher for the ball team that they had here in Stillwater. They played ball – everybody from 16-17 years old right up until they were 50 played.

Gus: This was softball.

Elsie: They played all the camps around.

Jan: My husband used to play.

Rob: So it was much harder working the dairy farm – when – are all the farms – all the dairy farms became beef at some point around here?

Gus: No, a lot of them stayed dairy farms until I guess they sold off the property or something.

Elsie: There's still one dairy farm.

Gus: One in Stillwater township.

Rob: Which one?

Elsie: Its' Westbrook's Farm, but you have to go out of Stillwater to go back into Stillwater to get to the farm.

Gus: You go into Frelinghuysen and then come back out to Stillwater again.

Jan: Really?

Gus: Down by Klines, you know where Klines lived down there?

Elsie: Down the road to Stonebridge Road you have to go over the stone bridge and soon as you get over the bridge you're in Frelinghuysen.

Jan: I didn't realize that.

Elsie: And then you go a little further and you're back in Stillwater.

Jan: Ok and that's the other dairy farm.

Elsie: Yeah, the only dairy farm left in Stillwater.

Gus: The old Kymers always considered that one of the tourist farms in Stillwater and he's still in business different people lived there but...

Jan: What breed of cattle do you have now?

Gus: Red angus.

Jan: I thought that's what those were. And do you sell off – how old are they when you sell them off then for meat?

Gus: Well it depends- you can always sell the young ones pretty fast.

Jan: Yeah, for veal.

Gus: But you got to take a lot less money for them so you let them get a bit bigger.

Elsie: -farming because he kept on farming right along because he went – when we bought the mill down here the people came from Brooklyn they wanted to build a mill to put in the museum down there so he did that you can see it on television – it's kind of great to see the thing.

Gus: I didn't recognize it 'til after.

Jan: Oh my gracious.

Gus: I had no idea it was going to be on there.

Elsie: And then they came from Waterloo and asked him to restore the mill there but

before that he did lumbering and he used to go down to (Falbrooks?) and he also carted milk for all the other farmers that were around and he would have a hundred of those cans on a rack truck and take it down to Johnsonburg and Westbrook farms.

Gus: That was exercise – move 6 tons every day.

Jan: Yeah, putting the cans on and off the truck.

Elsie: He would go – He'd milk the cows here, leave here and go all the way around picking up wood but Hermie – Did you do Hermie Crismans? Hermie Crismans? and Hobie Weller and uh –

Gus: Staley.

Elsie: Staley and uh –

Gus: Scuba.

Elsie: and Scuba and what's her name's uncle – Jenny's.

Gus: Oh no we never picked up his.

Elsie: Not him, but her uncle – used to go over on Hunts Road I can't think of his name – anyway you took the – (indistinct) and then he'd have to bring the cans back. Some of them he didn't need and they brought them back the next day. But he did all that and one Christmas morning he and – I don't know whether he and Leon or he and George – I don't know they went off and they never got back until after 1 o'clock. And you know you didn't open your presents before you got all that stuff done you know. But it all – it was snowing – Bud Hunt.

Gus: Oh Bud Hunt.

Elsie: Bud Hunt you used to pick up for.

Gus: That was up here on Potters Road. We couldn't get up – we got in – we backed in there but couldn't get up the grade so we had to back all the way out to the main road.

Jan: That must have been fun.

Rob: Are you still active on the farm these days?

Gus: Not very much – we don't do much farming anymore. We're all (indistinct) .Well the hay but Ed Chamings does that.

Rob: Who takes care of the cows now?

Gus: Well I do a little bit but Leon and the kids do that.

Rob: Your son.

Elsie: He takes care of the chickens.

Jan: He's back to that.

Elsie: That's were he started.

Jan: How many chickens do you have?

Elsie: Now? Well about 50, 60, 70.

Jan: Wow!

Elsie: Well we had a lot more.

Jan: Where are they all?

Gus: I don't think there's more than 50 there.

Elsie: Well we are getting 3 or 4 dozen a day that's for sure.

Gus: Chickens are hard to count. They keep moving all the time.

Jan: Are they all Rhode Island Reds?

Elsie: Yeah. We had two coops and we'd get 125 every year and then we'd get rid of 125 and then put this 125 over here and get another 125.

Jan: So you rotated.

Elsie: So we had about 250 before.

Jan: Is that refrigerator conked out again?

Elsie: Pardon?

Jan: Is that refrigerator conked out again?

Elsie: Yeah.

Jan: Yes, I did – I said Mike I think they need a new refrigerator.

Elsie: It's ok in the wintertime just put hot water out.

Rob: Did people come by every day for eggs?

Elsie: Sometimes we'll get rid of all the eggs over the weekend and then no body will come and we keep saying maybe we'll go to Hackettstown again because we will have so many eggs and then by the weekend they're all gone again.

Rob: And have you ever gotten tired of eating eggs?

Gus: No, I like eggs.

Jan: I like eggs – Elsie's eggs – Elsie and Gus have the best eggs around I'm here once a week because that's all I'm allowed.

Rob: Do you have any more questions?

Jan: I'm trying to think I had them lined up in my head.

Rob: Oh I do have one question I wanted to ask. Tell me something about music when you were growing up. Did a lot of people play musical instruments?

Gus: Very few around here. We had one guy that used to work for us. He stayed – lived here with us – a young guy I can barely remember him but he had a violin he used to play for Pop and Mother.

Jan: He did fiddling or actual classical violin?

Gus: I barely can remember.

Jan: Oh, I see – you were really little.

Gus: I was little yeah.

Jan: Now when did you and Willard Klem start working together at the mill?

Elsie: 1970.

Gus: When was it?

Elsie: Around 1970.

Gus: Yeah I guess it must have been somewhere around there – her memory is better than mine.

Jan: So did you and Willard work together up until the mill closed then?

Gus: Yeah.

Elsie: That was fun – we used to – during the week we had kids coming home from school and what’s her name – Jeanette and I – Jeanette Klem and I used to go down and run the mill and weekends we always had it open and somebody had to be there – another thing you had to get somebody...

Jan: Tied up.

Elsie: Is anybody going to be at the museum Sunday?

Jan: I don’t know why? That’s tomorrow.

Elsie: Because we have a church picnic otherwise I’d volunteer. Bob Chamings is here from Wisconsin and he wanted to come. He asked me when it was open.

Jan: I will stop on my way home. I’ll stop and see if anybody’s going to be there otherwise I’ll get somebody there.

Rob: Well, Gus Roof I want to thank you very much for talking with us and sharing your memories of Stillwater.

Gus: What little I can remember.

Rob: That was quite a lot and Elsie Roof, thank you too.

Elsie: Yeah, I’m the big mouth.

Jan: Yes, thank you – you fill in all the blanks.....and um.....(abrupt end)