

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview with Lawrence Earl**

**September 13, 2008**



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

**Transcribed by Maureen Block**

Rob: My name is Robert Jacoby from the Stillwater Township Historical Society and I am here with...

Jan: Jan Wiley – I'm also with the Historical Society.

Rob: And we are talking today, September 13, 2008 with Mr. Lawrence Earl at his home. Thank you very much, Lawrence, for taking the time...

Lawrence: You're welcome.

Rob: ...and having your thoughts recorded for posterity. Why don't you tell us first of all where you were born and what year it was?

Lawrence: I was born on Maple Avenue – the third house to the west of the little school and Dr. Landis was the attending physician who lived next door. I was um - I don't know whether it was a nice day or not but it was good for me – August 8, 1922.

Rob: Did you have brothers or sisters?

Lawrence: I have one sister. She is still living on Maple Avenue in the next house which was my grandparents home and she was just 92 in July.

Jan: Wow!

Lawrence: And she still works 3 days a week at the freeholders' office.

Rob: What did your parents do – what did your father do?

Lawrence: My father was a carpenter and builder same as my grandfather and he started learning the trade when they were building the barn where Donald Sharp lives. He told me his first job was making the pins which you peg the beams together. My mother was a homemaker and she had worked in the textile factory in Paterson before they got married. She came from Germany at the age of 6. She was very active with the church and during World War II she and Mrs. Van Horn were aircraft spotters. They had an observation post at the uh... It was in a little building – a wood building built on the deck of that new restaurant – The Boat House. And they had a telephone and a book showing all different kinds of aircraft so that during the day they could identify the plane and I gave that book to the Historical Society.

Rob: And did they ever see any German planes?

Lawrence: Not to my knowledge.

Jan: Was that through civil defense?

Lawrence: Pardon?

Jan: Was that through civil defense?

Lawrence: Yes.

Rob: So your mother came from Germany and then lived in Paterson?

Lawrence: Yes

Rob: Was your father also born in the area here?

Lawrence: My father was born in Stillwater but I think it was uh – it might have been on the farm where they took the gravel out – near Jackman’s. There was a farm there but it’s been demolished because at one point my grandfather was farming but we would only get 2 cents a quart for milk. It wasn’t a very lucrative way of earning a living so then he took up carpentering.

Rob: Did he have an automobile when you were a little boy?

Lawrence: No he had a horse and buggy which I can show you – had his “John W. Earl contractor and builder” painted on the side of the wagon. They would uh – sometimes they would take their tools to the job and they would stay there. But some of these homes were not very desirable – you were apt to get bedbugs or other problems so after a while he and my father both would take the material there to the job and then they would use bicycles to go back and forth to work.

Rob: So most of their work was within the county or at least near Blairstown?

Lawrence: He built a large number of farms in the area and uh I gave a copy of my research to the Society. I read all the New Jersey Herald or scanned all of them from 1880 to 1920 that’s when he passed away because I never – I was born after he died in 1920. So uh, my grandmother never really divulged too much information and uh as a kid you’re not too interested in these things. I have a lot of information that I condensed into some written material about he and my grandmother.

Rob: Do you think any of the barns he built are still standing?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, well the one at Sharp’s – unfortunately it won’t be with us very long cause I haven’t been able to talk the owner into doing anything. It’s too late now. The other one is right up the street past where the lady raises the dogs – Mrs. Cummings – it’s on the left.

Jan: On the left hand side.

Rob: Down below?

Lawrence: It's right there – there was a little pond – I don't know if it's still in existence.

Jan: It's like a culvert - it goes down in.

Lawrence: Yeah and the owner has put in a block foundation in which I think was originally wood. I am not sure I recall the exact name – his first name was Martin. [Lawrence later remembered it was Kishpaugh] A lot of barns were hit by lightning and burned down and that's what happened to that one. I would have to refer to my reference material to see what the date was but uh...

Rob: Was Maple Ave or any of the other streets in town paved?

Lawrence: No in fact I will show you they were dirt roads. When I was small they improved it and put tar and stone on it.

Rob: Describe for us what your school looked like.

Lawrence: Well, we had a one-room school and during my attendance Dr. James R Dalling was the teacher and he was also the minister at the Presbyterian Church and he was a World War I veteran and if you could get him to start on a war story – you had an easy day. We never had report cards so you never knew what grade you were in from one week to the next. It depended on his assessment of your situation. We never had lights even kerosene- uh but the room did have quite a few windows. As you walked in there was a little entry way and you turned left and went into the classroom. At the back of the classroom if you walked straight ahead there was a long coatroom where you could hang up your clothes and we had a drinking fountain there and beyond that there was a stove with a metal enclosure around it so you couldn't get burned. And in the back of the outside the building there was a coal shed and uh from my recollection the students brought in the coal and took the ashes out. I guess it was the teacher's job but we had some boys that were pretty good size so they probably did that. The water came from the well at the minister's house, which was a hand-dug well, and I loved to get that job because you could dawdle for 30- 45 minutes and it took 2 people to carry the bucket. If you were a good student you got that job. On the left of the front of the classroom were a couple of benches where you would go and recite morning and afternoon and the teacher had his desk up there. And blackboards in the back of the room – the front of the room rather. We had

as many as 60 students 1<sup>st</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We never had kindergarten, but we did go for a couple of weeks in May so that you became acclimated to the routine. I thought that was a very good idea at the time. And we used to have a county helping teacher – Miss Farber who would come around periodically. I don't know if her job was to check on a teacher or uh just what her function was but she would appear monthly. And then we would put on a coached display of our talents.

Rob: What were some of your subjects?

Lawrence: Reading, writing, arithmetic. Some English – I don't recall too much about it anymore but I do have copies of the different reading books because my father remodeled that into a dwelling after the new school opened. Justin Tharaud bought the property and my father made it into a home and he found a lot of reading books so I have a complete set of Jones Readers, which had very little usage. We never did anything with writing uh we had from time to time we had penmanship but it was never a big thing. As I said, we never had report cards so one year I wrote a letter to my aunt who was a legal secretary for an attorney in Paterson and it happened that he was on the State Board of Education. She took the liberty of showing my letter to her boss. Well, it took a couple of months but it filtered down from Trenton to the county superintendent and then to Dr. Dalling. So one day he announced that Aunt Emma said that we have to have penmanship. I realized at once who Aunt Emma was – my Aunt Emma. But that didn't last too long. My father on the other hand learned the Palmer Method – he had beautiful handwriting because he used to be Clerk of Session at the church. When you look at his minutes they were really very nice.

Jan: Beautiful.

Lawrence: But we didn't have that training. The year I turned eleven, I graduated. And also one of my classmates, Hazel Lewis, who lived where Donald Sharp lives now. So we both graduated and we were very young. It was 1933. [She stayed for a year and probably helped the teacher].

Jan: What year – what grade did you graduate?

Lawrence: It was 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Jan: You graduated 8<sup>th</sup> grade at 11?

Lawrence: Yeah, well I was 11 in August and Donald Robbins was in the same class but he went to the Middletown School. We had the graduation in Stillwater and a field day with running with burlap sacks and all kind of games. It was very nice. We never had any music to speak of except at Christmas and then Mrs. Dalling the teacher's wife would play. We had a piano but it

never got used except on a few occasions. So, I always say I was raised in a cultural void.

Rob: What did you do during the summer time?

Lawrence: By the time I was 15, I was working with my father's crew. Before that I would go along with him if he worked at Swartwood Lake and Fairview Lake and I would be a part-time gopher and fisherman and I would have my lunch with me and I would eat with the crew. It was a nice way to spend the summer. As I got older, I graduated to pick and shovel because we didn't have backhoes back then. They didn't arrive the smaller ones until after World War II. So if you wanted a water line you had to dig it by hand. And I also became a good painter because usually if we did a job we would do the painting and if you had a cedar shingle roof you would apply creosote which is now a no-no – hazardous and all that but other than burning your skin a little bit it never bothered anybody. One time we were working at this farm off of Mt. Benevolence – no not Mt. Benevolence – uh it turns off Millbrook Road – anyway we were back at this old farm and I am painting this new siding on an old barn – well I knocked the bucket of paint over and uh what do I do now cause the owner was there. So I got a shovel and dug a hole and covered it up so everything went good. The owner comes along and he steps in the paint. That was very embarrassing.

Jan: And you thought you had it all solved.

Rob: How did you explain that?

Lawrence: Well I guess I just...

Jan: Got caught.

Lawrence: Laughed it off. Then another time when I was growing up, at a church supper there was a Dr. Hercheloth who had a farm – a fruit farm where the YMCA camp is now and they were from Philadelphia – in fact he treated my grandfather for arthritis – rheumatism whatever they called it. So anyway, I'm a kid about 10 or 11. I'm sitting upstairs – my mother was in the kitchen. Our Sunday school room was above the kitchen which was this addition was built by my grandfather in 1910. So anyway, they had the tables upstairs and we had the dumbwaiter to bring the food up from the kitchen. I am sitting next to this lady and uh they had sliced beets and somehow or another I spilled the beet juice on her dress. I was mortified. I didn't know how to escape that situation.

Jan: No, that's something you can't.

Lawrence: I don't recall the repercussions but it was a bad evening. Then there was another fellow by the name of Westbrook – Lou – Lou Westbrook. We used to get a real charge out of him at the church suppers. He would eat his peas with a knife. That was a very neat trick and everybody would just sit there in amazement watching this.

Rob: One pea at time or a whole bunch?

Lawrence: I think he was able to do multiples because he had experience with it.

Jan: Oh, of course.

Lawrence: Now getting back to the school – we did have a problem with the coatroom because some of the kids had head lice and if you put a cap on there – they migrated. So one time I had them so my father clipped all my hair off and the painter's used to get free hats when you bought paint so he took one of those hats and put a kerosene soaked rag on it and I kept that on overnight and the next day they were all gone.

Jan: No more lice.

Lawrence: And the same family that was prone to bring this problem – they didn't wash much and even though Mrs. Dalling would give them soap it never made much difference. So that was a side effect. And one other thing for Biology which we didn't even know the term at the time – the teacher had a table in the back of the room with a lot of items in formaldehyde in jars so that you could see a frog or different items like that so we would have a chance to look that over and tell us story about it so it worked well. So, then I went to Newton High School and we rode on a bus. And the bus was owned by Harold Skinner and he had the garage where Lou Calasibetta has it now and this was a tall bus. It had cane seats. There were no seatbelts so when you'd go around the corner you would slide on these seats – you know small kids and uh so we would go to the garage every morning and take off for Newton. Sometimes he would drive it but mostly his mechanic would do it. And then later I believe he lost the contract because Albert Keen became – not Albert Keen – Albert Roof became the school bus driver and he had a Ford bus but you couldn't stand up. It had a very low ceiling – you had to kind of crouch and walk to the seats and the windows weren't very good because going up route 94 in the winter the snow would blow right into the cracks by the windows. I'm afraid we gave him a pretty hard time because we would have water pistol fights so we would have an inkbottle as a spare. When we got to Middleville he had to turn around by the bridge so Donald would run down to the brook and fill up our ink bottles so we would have enough ammunition to get us back to Stillwater. That was a lot of fun. On really icy days we didn't have a lot of these snow days. Even if the kids from over in Sandyston, Hainesville and

that area – if they were a little late – well they were just a little late. We didn't have snow days because people didn't worry about the liability and we never had any accidents so on days like that Albert was a very high strung person and uh dealing with us made it worse so his father would have to drive the bus on those days. That was Ed Roof – that was Gus Roof's uncle.

Jan: Now how did they clear the roads?

Lawrence: They had plows. In fact, in the early years the township used to hire people with square pointed shovels – they would dig out the drifts – cause you couldn't plow the drifts particularly on uh like Old Schoolhouse Road – that was very difficult and Harold Garriss he used to do some of that. I never got involved – I was too young.

Rob: Did they have horse-drawn plows or were they mechanisms?

Lawrence: Some of the farmers did but see they only had to go to the creamery by where the Agway used to be cause that's where the train came thru. My grandfather built that building twice. One time it burned down and then he rebuilt it.

Rob: Do you remember there being a blacksmith in town?

Lawrence: Oh there was a blacksmith adjacent to Robbins' store. His name was Bonker. [George Bonker, and he lived in house across bridge on road leading to Swartswood Lake].

Rob: What was that place like?

Lawrence: Well that was the red barn that's owned by I guess it's the Gordons.

Jan: Yes, Kate Gordon.

Lawrence: That's right adjacent here. I don't think he owned the property. That was owned by Amos Pettit who lived in that home. We would go over and watch him after school on our bicycles – cause he was always making something there and we would get to run the bellows. Heat stuff up – that was kind of a fun thing to do plus you learned what people did. I recall him shoeing a few horses but that wasn't a big thing like now.

Rob: When do you think he went out of business?

Lawrence: When did he go out of business? Probably by the early 40's I would imagine.



Rob: Were there other blacksmiths in Stillwater?

Lawrence: No, there was one in Blairstown. I remember in the early 50's we used to take picks down to be sharpened. I don't even know where you would get it done now – you could grind 'em but there aren't anybody that would be willing to do that.

Rob: Where did your mother buy her groceries?

Lawrence: We usually went to Newton on Saturday night. You could go to the movies. I could get in for 15 cents and they had Vaudeville usually on Saturday on stage at the old Newton Theatre – the one that's operating at the current time. I can remember when they had cow-milking contests on stage. You would see who could get so much milk in a time period. That was quite a contest.

Rob: So you didn't go – you didn't buy stuff at the Garris Store?

Lawrence: We bought stuff at Garris' but when I was about 10 or 12 we always went to Newton because my father would frequently pick up hardware items at the Woodward Hardware Company, which is, where Morris Downing and Sherrod have their offices. Um, part of their complex was a bank – Merchant's Bank I believe. It was either Sussex or Merchant's because they combined to become Sussex and Merchant's and built that building that you see now.

Rob: On the green?

Lawrence: Yeah, but the other building after it was a bank it became a grocery store and had varied uses until the attorneys bought it.

Rob: Did that also have a bowling alley?

Lawrence: No, um I'll get to that later. The building adjacent to that office was Woodward Hardware which was purchased maybe 15 years ago and they created more offices. Now the bowling alley was um located below where Cochran Plaza is now – its parking lot. There was a hardware store um and as I recall it was above the hardware store because you walked up the street to enter it – on a uh like a ramp. That was operated by a chap named Frank Thieme and uh I forget when that went out of business.

Rob: Did you bowl much there?

Lawrence: Pardon?

Rob: Did you go bowling there?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, the first bowling alley in the county was over at the Sparta Municipal building. That was uh the one that was demolished had the police department downstairs. Early on in the 30's they had two bowling alleys down there and that's the first place that I experienced bowling was in Sparta.

Rob: Now you mentioned that your family would go into Newton on Saturday evening.

Lawrence: Yeah, then I could get to go to the movies.

Rob: Was that a common thing? Did a lot of people head into town on Saturdays?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, the streets were busy. The stores were open – clothing stores.

Rob: So for you, Newton was definitely the big town.

Lawrence: Yeah, now see my father's uncle – Phillip Earl and his son they gravitated to Blairstown cause they had a theatre and they had a meat market there so um...

Jan: Now where was the Blairstown theatre located then?

Lawrence: Well it was uh?

Rob: Where they have the theatre now.

Lawrence: Roy's theatre is still there – it's open now. Harold Garris and I used to ride our bikes down to go the movies at night there.

Jan: All the way down there?

Lawrence: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah, it's not that far.

Lawrence: The old bank building when the main street – I think there might be a barber there now but directly across the street was a butcher called Brand's and Losey and I have an amusing story about my father's uncle. He would always order hot dogs so the guy would be putting the hot dogs on the scale and my grandfather – my father's uncle would grab one for himself and grab one for his son and they would be munching on the hot dogs while the guys weighing it and the butcher finally clamped down on that – didn't like those free hot dogs. Now another facet of that butcher

shop uh was a fellow, John Gaul, whose grandson is um Bill Gaal – he lives across the bridge in the old slave quarters – Shafer’s slave quarters. Anyway, John had a varied career. He um – he ran a meat wagon for this butcher so he would come by once a week and ring his bell and he always had a ring of summer bologna hanging on the side and he’d give – every kid would get a chunk of bologna and then your mother would go out and buy whatever she wanted from the butcher. So that went on for quite a long time.

Rob: So it was more common to buy meat from a butcher shop than from a local farmer?

Lawrence: As far as produce Garris’s didn’t carry that – they carried more staple items that didn’t spoil so that’s what my mother would buy in Newton.

Rob: Did many people have gardens – vegetable gardens?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, everybody had a garden.

Rob: You did?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, I became a gardener when I was about 16 I guess...

Rob: And would your mom...

Lawrence: My sister was not fond of the garden.

Rob: Did your mother put up...

Lawrence: Oh yeah, she even canned chickens.

Jan: Oh my!

Lawrence: Tomatoes, peaches all those things with a pressure cooker and then later they had a place called Vitafreeze in the late 30’s and it was uh – it was on East Clinton Street and there was an old brick building there that I think the power company had at one time or another – it’s gone now and a fellow has a garage – does transmission work there. But you could go there and rent space in their freezer but they distribute frozen foods so you could go there – take your items there and they would quick freeze it and store it there and then when you wanted to pick it up you just went there and you go in and get your items.

Rob: So you had a refrigerator?

Lawrence: No.

Rob: An ice box?

Lawrence: Early on we had an icebox and Howard would come and fill it with ice. [A chap named Teague from Andover].

Rob: All year round?

Lawrence: Well in the winter I don't recall having any ice.

Rob: Where was the ice cut do you know?

Lawrence: A fellow came from Andover. [Ice may have come from Picket's Ice Plant in Newton, where STS is across from ShopRite. It burned down].

Rob: Did they cut the ice on Swartwood Lake?

Lawrence: We used to cut the ice right here. That was Mr. Lewis. He had the farm on 521 and my father would help him. There was a depression dug into the pond and you could float the ice over to the edge of the uh inclined driveway. You backed your truck down and you had some planks. And of course you put a little water on them and they were nice and smooth so you just pulled the ice up and stack it in the truck and then they would put it in the icehouse and put sawdust around the layers. 'Cause the building had a double wall with sawdust in between. That's what he used to cool his milk.

Rob: And did the ice last through much of the summer?

Lawrence: Yeah, usually.

Rob: Do you remember having a radio when you were a little kid?

Lawrence: Well my mother – my grandmother had an Atwater-Kent with batteries. We never had a radio until the power line came through. Now my father had a Delco generating plant with Edison cells in glass jars and he built a concrete building and put shelves in there and that's where the batteries were stored and then he had a gas engine and he would run the gas engine usually on Monday and he had built a concrete reservoir up on the hill in the back of our home and he would fill that tank with water and that would last us all week – it would go to our second floor bathroom. My mother would usually do the wash that day while this was running. It was 32 volt direct current... and Dr. Lan...but ours only ran once a week . Dr. Landis had a different type and that ran...it had a storage battery to start it but every time it needed electricity this generator would run. It was a noisy thing.

Rob: When did electricity come to town?

Lawrence: That was in the mid 30's. When it came around they sold stock and bonds, which automatically became worthless because these companies would transform themselves into a new entity and every time they did that your little stake in it became less. It was sort of a scam but we didn't understand it but that was to build the line. My father and Dr. Landis they weren't in a big rush to have it because they were already operating quite nicely. And uh, getting back to the ice – there was an ice making plant in Newton where the uh tire and auto place is across from Shop-Rite and that burned down. And then Sussex County Battery built a building there later and they sold out to these people that are currently there so there was ice being manufactured along with ice from the ponds. Now the creamery which I mentioned my grandfather built – that had a big icehouse attached and um they would get a contract to cut the ice and fill the icehouse so that was a job for people in the winter but it was the same style as Mr. Lewis on a larger scale. At that time there were big icehouses in the Poconos. They would fill those icehouses and ship it down to New York in the summer by rail and Lake Hopatcong same thing.

Rob: Did you ever take a train into New York or Newark? Or do you remember the first time you went into the big city?

Lawrence: Well we used to go visit my aunts and uncles in Paterson but we always drove there in the car but that was in like the 30's. I remember the WPA working as you approached Newfoundland they were doing highway work and they had all these men out there they would bring them with buses from Newark and Paterson and they all had – they would issue them army overcoats because it was cold – much colder than now. There was a lot of manual labor being done there.

Rob: What was the route from here to Paterson?

Lawrence: Well we would go on Route 23. We would go through Ogdensburg and go on Route 23 and down through Stockholm and uh I'm not sure the route as you approach Paterson. When I was small I would stay there for a week like a vacation and I would get a haircut at the barber school for 10 cents. My uncle would take me on the bus. That was quite exciting. When I went to college at Newark College of Engineering, I used to uh frequently take the train from the Broad Street Station on Lackawanna and I would go to Dover and of course the first part was electric. When we got to Dover we had to change trains because a steam train would come from Boonton and I would go to Newton and Branchville and we would pick up some students at St. Elizabeth's on our way up. But usually I would get a ride with another student like on Monday morning to go there. There was a

chap in Newton – his parents had an ice cream store and he had access to a car – some gentlemen – elderly gentleman didn't drive and he would drive him on weekends but during the week he used the car and it was always a new car. This chap would gather up about 5 of us and we'd journey to Newark and that gave him gas money. It worked out very well.

Rob: Do you recall anyone during Prohibition running alcohol?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, they had all these uh – a lot of the farms around the Swartswood area were owned by Italian immigrants and I won't say they were the only ones but they were some of the them and they – the only reason they got caught – they would discharge their waste into the brook. Well people would see this and the sheriff would show up and uh one sheriff got into a little difficulty because I think he was condoning this behavior for whatever reasons which I won't delve into. But that was pretty common. And then uh, of course my good friend Dr. Perona – his father founded the Perona farms restaurant. He has some interesting tales to tell about alcohol.

Rob: Were you aware as a small boy about The Depression or did it not have much impact on you?

Lawrence: If I wanted most anything I would save up cause I used to trap skunks. They were prone to go into the drainpipes under your driveway. For some reason they liked to...

Jan: a den

Lawrence: crawl through there so I would set a trap and uh then they would get caught and I would clobber them over the head and then I would sell them to Mr. Westbrook. He would skin 'em. He would give you – if it was all black you got 75 cents – if it was a little white you would get 50 cents. And all the boys around here and if you caught a muskrat same thing. You picked up a little money. My first business venture was selling nightwalkers and uh my sister always claimed that my mother did most of the work but I caught quite a few myself. And uh, I had regular customers – I had two men from Easton they had places over at Silver Lake beyond Blairstown. They would call up and order a 100 and uh so that was a little source of income.

Rob: How much would you get for a 100?

Lawrence: Well I don't recall the exact amounts but then later I became – I got into the chicken business. Mr. Lester Van Horn uh he owned those chicken coups adjacent to the school. In fact he sold the property to the school – the current school and he lived in that big house – the second one from the

church. That's where his father Obadiah. Well when I got to know Obadiah I was about 10 and he would go to the second creamery which was called Bellwood. That was up in back of Bill Jackman's adjacent to the railroad and uh so Mr. Van Horn Sr. would go over there every day and pick up pasteurized milk. So I would take our uh our milk pail up there and exchange for a full pail every other day and I'd sit and talk with Obadiah. So, I was very fond of him. I think it was reciprocated and he taught me how to play dominoes. That was his favorite game so I had to have his chair – I still have it. Mr. Lester Van Horn, his son, he was a bookkeeper down in Newark area– he went to some business college, but later he came back to Stillwater and he started in the chicken business and uh so he would take me to the poultry growers group in Newton. They used to meet at the courthouse and they'd have discussions there. So he was my mentor there for the chicken business so at one point I used to raise the broilers – I would get the mixed – you get some pullets and some roosters. So then my mother would uh – I would help kill 'em – she would dress 'em – she would sell them for 35 cents a pound. I got part of the money. Then the pullets I could get \$3.00 in fall and you would get them at night with a rod with a hook on the end – you'd grab the legs off the roost, put 'em in a bag and people would come and buy 'em. They were ready to lay. So gradually I ended up with a 125 laying hens. My grandfather had a chicken coop, which needed some attention. The windows had broken away so I learned how to glaze the window sash and it was a beautiful hen coop because uh it had clerestory windows – It had a sloping roof in the front – sloping toward you with windows underneath. It had these windows at the top and they let sunshine into the back of the coop so it was a very sunny arrangement. That's where my sister lives – it's gone now but sometimes I would get 100 eggs a day.

Jan: Well, they were happy chickens.

Lawrence: With 125 and uh I cleaned – I don't know if you know much about chickens but we had these roost poles and the droppings go on this flat deck underneath. So, I always cleaned that every day and put lime on it so there was never any odor so I think they were happy chickens.

Jan: Yeah, they must have been.

Rob: Did you have to worry about foxes and hawks?

Lawrence: Well there was wire on the windows – if you left the windows open there was wire there and uh we never had much trouble with foxes but there's another little animal that got in. [a weasel].

[Missed wording due to flip over of tape.]

Rob: A constable, a policeman?

Lawrence: Yeah, we had a constable – and I don't know really what his duties were but he would haul people into Dr. Dowling's court.

Rob: This is your teacher – Dr. Dalling – he also was the Justice of the Peace?

Lawrence: Yeah, I am not too cognizant of their duties. We didn't have much in the way of alcoholism at the time. There were drunks but they were quiet drunks and a very few were driving. And we had a barbershop adjacent to where Bischof's office is – that small building right near the street and he always had – uh that was Mr. Catalano. So you could get your hair cut and then in the back room they always had a table with bottles so you could get a drink there if you're an adult. That got closed up after WWII.

Rob: I want to ask you about uh visiting and uh how did people relate to one another in town? Was there a lot of back and forth visiting?

Lawrence: Well we had Halloween. The mothers would dress up with the kids and you had to guess who these people were.

Jan: That's funny.

Lawrence: It wasn't like now – they run in get an apple and take off. But then it was kind of a nice game because everybody knew everybody and you had to figure out who they were. And then we would go down and play cards at the Lewis'. They had – their one daughter was the same age as my sister and the other daughter was my age so my mother would go down with us and we would have a nice evening there playing cards or dominoes. And then they used to have card parties at the museum on the second floor – well maybe on the first floor too. They played a game called 500. I remember going there when I was 12 or 13. I think when you played 500 – you would bid so much – it was something like bridge I guess. I don't recall the details and then they would have refreshments and the charge was negligible. And then we used to have local news cause if the paper came out Thursday – well the person that – you got paid by the inch. [a local person would write about Stillwater news items and get paid by the column inch]. So this person would always report on the card party and sandwiches and pickles and cheese were served with some other little thing – anything to build up the number of inches on the column but that was one of her favorite little ditties that she would insert.

Rob: Were church socials a big thing?

Lawrence: Well we had a lot of suppers then – more than now. They'd have like a social where you would bid on a cake and stuff – box social and then I



guess you would eat with that person but I don't recall that as a teenager. But it was popular. And then they would have a party like that and have a donation for the pastor. I guess it was like a supplement to his salary.

Rob: What about families that were in a bad way financially – did the community help them out much?

Lawrence: Oh yeah, I remember one time a family had a fire over at Little Swartswood Lake. My father had a truckload of stuff that he took over there that people donated because they lost most everything so I think there was a lot of that going on.

Jan: Now when did you go off to Newark College of Engineering?

Lawrence: Pardon?

Jan: What year did you go to college?

Lawrence: I graduated in '43. I had kind of a checkered career. I was very young. I shouldn't have gone to high school, but he shouldn't have graduated us that early so I finished high school and uh we had a customer at Swartswood Lake, Mr. James Garabrandt and uh my father used to work there quite a bit. And he lived with two sisters – he was a widower. And I think the sisters were insurance agents. They were all great readers so every birthday I would get a book or two and so I became a great reader as a result of their interest. So um, he was a great Rutgers man so he got me a scholarship at Rutgers Prep. So I spent one year at Rutgers Prep and I worked as a waiter every other week. It was a cottage style arrangement. We had these round tables and uh a teacher and his wife or if there was a single teacher there would be one of those at each table. And they would uh, if you didn't have clean fingernails there they would tell you to go clean them before you could eat. It was interesting. And I liked being a waiter because we got all the extra desserts. They had pancakes you could – the cook would keep on making them for you as long as you could eat them and then uh the school building itself that was a residential part. It was down at the end of College Avenue. You had to go by the Rutgers gymnasium and it was a pretty good distance. So you didn't have much time to dawdle after breakfast. You had to get yourself down there and it was right across the street from the railroad – Pennsylvania Railroad. I don't think the building is there now. They've relocated and it's not a residential school anymore and uh so that worked out pretty well and I went there and found out I never cared for plain geometry because the teacher would put the theorems on the board and then go sit in the back and take a nap. He was not really too interested in our education so most people didn't care for it. Well, I got down there and instead of taking solid geometry, which only lasted a few days the headmaster took me aside and said you really got to take plain geometry again. So I did and I loved it

ever after but that's between a good school and a poor school. So I knew Newton High School was average. My daughter went there. They never finished the chemistry book because the teacher was prone to drinking so he may have done the same thing. Because when she went to Bucknell University it was very hard for her on chemistry because she had poor training. My son went to Blair Academy. They went through the book completely and reviewed it but they only had 10 and 12 students over there at that time but when my son went there they didn't have girls – that came later.

Jan: Yeah, it was all male.

Lawrence: They had them during WWI but there were some incidents with pregnancy and that stopped and I think the girls went to Centenary. That was in the early days of Centenary when it was more of a prep school.

Rob: I wanted to ask you about your house. Did you have an outhouse?

Lawrence: Well of course, everybody had one.

Rob: When did you first get plumbing?

Lawrence: Well I was small. I must have been about 5 or 6 when my father put plumbing in, but he was very progressive. I've described the water system and uh he built a concrete septic tank with two compartments and drainage and uh when Dave De Lew sold the house there was a problem with drainage because the ground has a lot of clay so they were able to utilize the original septic tanks that my father made out of concrete.

Rob: For hot water did you heat the water up on the stove?

Lawrence: We had what was called a hot water back. It was a cast iron device with a – like a circuitous route through it and that went to - that was on the stove – it's part of the stove and then it went to a water storage tank. The only problem is with hard water that would get clogged up and I spent many hours with a star drill trying to pound that lime out of there.

Rob: Yeah, it becomes rock hard.

Lawrence: But uh, I think around 1940 maybe a little bit earlier with the advent of the electric stove then we got an electric water heater and he ran that off the cistern water so we didn't have that problem after that. Softeners weren't prevalent at that time.

Rob: You mentioned earlier that you – the town was electrified in the '30's. Did you have a telephone at that same time?

Lawrence: Yeah, we had one on the wall. You would crank it up and it was a party line. Yours would be maybe 4 long rings and one short ring. The only difficulty was that we had some nosy people. You picked it up and then in a little bit you'd hear another click and you would know she was listening. So that's how they got the news.

Rob: When were the phones put in before the electric lines?

Lawrence: Oh, they were earlier.

Rob: From the teens maybe or uh...

Lawrence: Well, it's written up in my uh – my collection of articles from the Herald which there is a copy of them at the museum. I think Mr. Van Horn Sr. was one of the first ones to get a phone and then I think the General Store.

Rob: Can I ask you about um the town politics?

Lawrence: Well Mr. Lester Van Horn was the town clerk for a long time and he used to keep the ballot boxes at his house and he would take them over to the town hall. Now the town hall was originally a school. It was Phil Little's plumbing shop later, but if you go up Millbrook Road – at the first intersection – that's where the school was. I don't know if they cut it in half but they moved that down to that site across from Phil Little's house.

Rob: You mean where the current municipal building is?

Lawrence: I don't know the name of the current owner but it's before you get to the intersection on 521 and going down to Middleville post office. It's a little building on the right. That was an interesting building. No plumbing and it didn't have electric in 1950 because I was on the election board so if you wanted a drink of water – you better bring it with you and you need the bathroom well you'd have to go home 'cause there were no facilities.

Rob: Do you remember...

Lawrence: And it was only occupied like you had the committee had a meeting – it had a stove – or an election things like that otherwise there was no one there.

Rob: Did local people – mayor or the town council – where they divided by parties?

Lawrence: Oh, yeah we had three – we had three committee people and my father said that he remembers when they would give you a cigar with a dollar bill

wrapped around it and they weren't too far from the polls to get you to vote and he was uh. I think he might have been a Democrat I'm not sure.

Rob: Do you remember if the town was mostly Democrat or Republican?

Lawrence: Well I think it swayed back and forth.

Rob: What did your father think of Roosevelt?

Lawrence: Well we listened to his fireside chats – I remember that. I don't really – I remember we used to go shopping in Easton occasionally and they had a newspaper there with a – a teletype – something like they used to have in Times Square. You could see the news outside and I remember I guess it was a ball game on so we were over there watching it. That was about the time they had the auto strikes. The autoworkers – because that would come up on the news. I remember that in particular and that was of course during Roosevelt's era. I never heard him talk too much about it. He liked to listen to prizefights. Always listened to that, but we always listened to the president on the radio and uh he was an excellent speaker and his dog, Fala. He would always talk about that.

Rob: You never mentioned – you haven't mentioned yet about a dog. Did you have dogs growing up?

Lawrence: Oh, I always had dogs. There's a picture of my dog there. I always had a bunch of dogs, but you know they would run out into the road and get hit by a car and it was sad. And I had a beagle with no papers. That was the most stupid beagle. He didn't last – I think he was two years old. And we had a uh – my daughter had a friend and they had these mixed collies oh maybe about this high. They had one nobody wanted it – he was kind of the runt. He was the best dog we ever had. And uh,

Rob: He appreciated you.

Lawrence: Well, he was smart. He would uh – I would take some peanut butter on a piece of bread and push it up against the roof of his mouth and he would struggle a little bit but he was right back for another chunk. When we were in high school we all had bicycles. I had saved up and got one from Sears for maybe about \$25 and uh so we would get together – all the students and I'd ride over to Middleville and then we would go see Floyd Monroe and um look around their farm and we were always uh – we would gather hickory nuts or walnuts and then as we got older we learned how to hunt. We would hunt squirrels and rabbits. There were no deer to speak of. If you wanted to hunt deer like in 1940 you had to go up on the Appalachian Trail. There were none here. And uh, sometimes we would camp out in the summer because we had wheels. If it was raining maybe in the winter we

would go over to Donald's house and uh we would play Monopoly all day. Mrs. Robins would give us lunch. That was a nice way to spend the day. And as long as you got home by supertime everything was ok. Or we'd go watch Mr. Lewis put silage in his silo. That would always happen about the first week of school. So you would go down there after school and he would have corn on the wagon and he would through it in the blower and it was pretty noisy. He'd run the blower with the belt off his tractor and that would shove it up into the top of the silo. That was interesting to watch. And then I mentioned John Gaal. One of Mr. Gaal's other jobs was making cider and the barn is still there – I don't know if the equipment's there. It was a two level barn and you delivered your apples up on top in bags. You would pick them up and put 'em in burlap bags and they would go down through a shoot onto the press. And they had like blankets – I don't what material and he would cover the blanket with apples and he would squeeze it and you would get the juice – the cider. Then he would walk out the door – he had a little landing there and he would dump the pulp in a pile and the farmers would come and pick it up. I often wondered if the cows got drunk cause it was kind of fermenting by that time. And then the Board of Health came around and said you got to wash the apples so – ok I'll do that so he put a faucet up there and he would open it just a little crack so it would kind of drip on the apples and that was as far as that went. So anyway according to rules he was washing the apples. But nobody ever got sick cause he would always give us a glass of cider – any kid that went over there after school.

Jan: Where was that barn located?

Lawrence: It's right where Billy Gaal lives. It's still there. I don't know if the stuff...

Jan: You mean the one – the barn that's up by Cedar – up from the house there? Oh, ok.

Lawrence: Yeah it's just before you get to the house. I don't know if the – I'll have to ask Bill someday when I see him if the equipment's still there because that was a lot of fun things to do.

Rob: From your house could you hear Shafer's mill at work?

Lawrence: No, not even before I had hearing aids. It wasn't noisy. I used to buy feed there from Mrs. McCord. She ran it until maybe 1940 – somewhere in that time frame but her problem was when the stream got low she couldn't operate the mill so JC Roy and sons they uh got a big electric motor and they would grind it all year round. And uh my father built the big brothers camp which became Camp Nejeda – he built that in the late 20's and in the course of their camp activity the kids started getting ear aches from the pond because the pond has no inlet or outlet – Saddleback Pond. So they

decided – they built a crib. It was a flat deck with a railing around the perimeter and they had 4 containers for rocks and that way you could sink it. And they had 6 by 6 posts that were down into the bottom with holes into it so you could adjust the level. You put rods in posts and it would hold the crib in a certain location. Well, they decided why don't we pump some fresh water from the Paulinskill into our pond in the vicinity of the crib so uh my father got this 4 inch galvanized pipe and they ran it out over the top of the hill from the stream to the swimming area and they had a little building down there with a pump and a gas engine – something like a car engine – it was pretty powerful so they started to pump the water up there. Well first thing you know when the water got low Mrs. McCord realized they're stealing my water so she took them to court and won. That was unfortunate because they brought the kids from the streets of New York out there and some of them were pick pockets. My father had a lot of trouble with tools being stolen and they had a fellow Leonard Metz that ran the program year round. So he was very strict. He had these heavy boxing gloves so if he had a disciplinary problem he'd get the kids in a circle and these two kids who were making trouble he'd get them out in the center of the group with these big fat boxing gloves and they would slug it out and when they had enough – he would have rounds. He ran it in a fair way but this way – there was no other way to discipline these kids. They were really bad you know they lived on the street. So they learned about being a sports person. They had ballgames there. The locals used to play with them – play against them. They learned swimming and boating and probably some health issues and they had good food and uh it worked out very well but then uh I don't know what occurred that they stopped. Maybe they had trouble raising funds. Then Jacob Emmons who has a nearby farm – he bought the property and ultimately he sold it to Camp Nejeda people. I built a lot of buildings for them including their new dining hall and the caretakers' residence – the director. That property came off the Skinner Farm, which is where Whitehall is. So everything over the little brook became part of Camp Nejeda.

Rob: Was Fairview lake camp in operation then too?

Lawrence: Oh yeah when I was a teenager.

Rob: Did you go up to the lake?

Lawrence: That was donated by Colonel Colgate – now I don't know if he was a Colgate-Palmolive or not but he donated that property. There used to be 2 camps – Kittatinny and Minnisink. Kittatinny was up on the hill, Minnisink was down near the lake and they were different age groups. I built the new dining hall in the 60's that you see there now and a bunch of new cabins because the old cabins didn't have windows. The mosquitoes were pretty rough but they each had their own kitchen and dining room at

that time. And just the one uh – used to go back to Camp Towadena that was at Bergen county boy scouts. My father did a lot of work there and built the cabin down by the lake, which is accessed around the west end.

Rob: Is it Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco?

Lawrence: Camp Towadena is now owned by the township but you had to go through someone else's property to get there – (through the large y)? I tried to get access to the other end because I wanted to see what happened to the buildings. They have that locked now. But it's Stillwater's property and I don't know why we can't access it because you can take a canoe and get on the lake there because that's where the waterfront was and to climb down from where the buildings were at Camp Towadena is very hilly and probably hazardous with snakes – a lot of rattlesnakes around there and copperheads. And it was all grown up with uh rhododendron in the 30's but they had trails. So the boys would come down and use the facilities at the lake – take a swim and then they would go back up and have their field games and everything up on top by their dining hall.

Rob: After college you went into the service?

Lawrence: Two weeks later. I was in the army reserves then.

Rob: And how long were you in the service?

Lawrence: I was in a little over 3 years and uh they did a good sales job at Fort Dix when we left. I had gotten commissioned through the Air Corps as a communications officer and ultimately wound up creating loran-mapping charts that they used on the planes and um so I signed up in the reserve and I spent 30 years in the reserve. I used to go for two weeks every year and I was assigned to a lot of different air bases. As you progress you go to different places. I spent a lot of time at Andrews Air Base and Stewart Air Base and other places.

Rob: Did you learn to fly?

Lawrence: No, I'm partially colorblind. No, I was uh – after Korea they reclassified everybody because a bunch of people went to college on the GI Bill. And you know when you first went into the army they didn't care – I couldn't get into the Navy because of the color problem I knew that because I had a lot of friends who went in their officer training immediately – well I wound up as a private. I wound up in the corps of engineers and I became a sergeant and I had a very good relationship with this captain I worked for so they went to New Guinea, that battalion.

Rob: Did you go with them?

Lawrence: No, I had been accepted for Engineer Officer Candidate School – so he said – I had been waiting for a few months – so he said I’m going to transfer you to another unit so you can wait and go to OCS. Well, I did fortunately I learned to type in high school. I became a clerk. I read everything that came across the desk. So I found out – and I’m waiting and nothing’s happening – so I see the Air Corps at that time they want communications people so I figured well I could do that and you had to have two years of college so I went to another officers board and passed that and a few weeks later I got home on leave and I went to South Carolina – I guess it South or North – North or South Carolina. I’m trying to think of the air base now – Seymour Johnson Air Force Base I guess it is now. We had 3 months of Officer Candidate School. Well I was only half way then after that they sent us to Yale so I followed in Mr. Bush’s footsteps. Well at Yale we had communications, engineering which was uh aircraft maintenance, meteorology, photography – all the technical stuff. And we were there for about 5 and ½ months.

Rob: Were you in special classes or were you with regular Yale students?

Lawrence: This was military classes, but we ate in their dining hall. They would march us over there.

Rob: How old were you at this point?

Lawrence: About 5 ½ months.

Rob: No, how old were you?

Lawrence: I was 20 when I went in the military.

Rob: So college age.

Lawrence: Yeah. The food was excellent and I loved it because I got \$78 a month as a sergeant. All the other guys got \$50 – they were cadets – well we were all cadets but I got more money but anyway the housing was interesting. They had these suites with a living room and two sleeping rooms and uh on each side of the stairway – at the end of the stairs there was one bathroom. This would have been two Yale students but now it became 4 uh military so here’s 8 guys fighting for one bathroom ‘cause everybody does everything at the same time and then of course we had the old military harassment to try to uh – I think they tried to see how much you really wanted to do it because a lot of guys washed out just from the aggravation. Post and Seymour Johnson up there and if you ran a foul in the discipline system like didn’t make your bed properly yeah or your white gloves were soiled or any old thing you had to walk a tour on the



green out in front of the college on Sunday with a rifle. Anyway, I graduated, I got a commission and then later they sent me to MIT to learn how to make charts.

Rob: And when did you return finally to Stillwater?

Lawrence: It was February '46.

Rob: So up – except for when you were in college or in the service you always lived in Stillwater? And you built this house that we're sitting in now when?

Lawrence: 1949 – your sitting in the original and when our children came along I built the addition on the west end and we lived here ever since. My wife grew up in Blairstown. Her parents had a nice farm over there.

Jan: What was her maiden name?

Lawrence: Her name was Ellen Gaisler.

Jan: I know Gaislers.

Lawrence: Gaisler Road is named after her father and uh she went to the one room school in Jacksonburg right across the way just before you get to the cemetery.

Jan: Yeah I know right where you're talking about.

Lawrence: We both had something in common – we both got to carry the water pail for the drinking water. She was in nurses training when I was in Newark but I didn't know her at the time. She went to Newark City Hospital and after she got her RN her first job was in Newton and then she went to different places until we got married. Then she quit working but then she worked for other things. She did all of our rock gardens.

Rob: Yeah, they're lovely.

Lawrence: Out back and she always had a big garden. She tried it here on our property but it was too shady. She always had it down where my office was at my mother's property. I took that over after my mother passed away. I used to have an office downstairs and then I moved it down there because I had all my equipment there.

Jan: So did you build all those storage barns in back of the house?

Lawrence: I just built the two sheds.

Jan: That's what I'm talking about – they're huge.

Lawrence: The two-story barn was always there – 'cause my father had always a couple of cows.

Jan: My husband and I had looked at that house when it was for sale – when the DeLews had it on the market.

Lawrence: It was owned by my grandfather but he never lived there. That brochure was incorrect. My father lived there and then he – my grandfather bought the house. My father paid him back and then I grew up there. So the brochure was incorrect. My grandfather had very little schooling but he must have been fairly prosperous at the time because he bought this land after it was timbered off. Some fellow in Portland bought it – cut everything off. Brought a sawmill here – cut the timber off and then he sold it. And he also bought the property there near Steve Gillan and uh for his brother and then his brother paid him off. There used to be a grange hall there in that little triangle just beyond the bridge a two-story building.

Jan: Really did they move it?

Lawrence: It's over at Lake Pacoma. If you go on your way to Fredon there's a fellow has a garage and there's another building right next to the driveway with a lot of mailboxes. It's down in there – there's a little lake. That's where they moved it and the owner that bought it he made it into apartments. My grandfather was very active in the grange. They used to go to Atlantic City – I don't know how they went. They must have went to Paterson or somewhere and changed trains – because that was the only way to go.

Jan: They didn't have a parkway or anything back then. When was the parkway opened up? That wasn't until...

Rob: 50-52.

Jan: Yeah, something like that. That's when I was born.

Rob: 53.

Lawrence: I'd say around 1950, I got some lumber from Canada. It came over on the railroad over here so that we unloaded and we brought it over to our storage place. 'Cause I met this fellow in Quebec one time when I was on vacation and we had a long conversation and he said I can uh I can ship you tongue and groove boards, 2x4, 2x6, 2x8 so he would send this – he would cut the timber rough – he would send it on a railroad car, they

would plane it at another location, put it back in the railroad car and it would come here. But it was too much work.

Rob: And then you sold it?

Lawrence: And the other problem was they had random lengths. It wasn't every two feet like when you buy it in the lumber yard and there was no grade stamps on it so you couldn't even use it now, but there's a lot of it in this house.

Jan: And it's still standing.

Lawrence: And these beams Roy Bischof Sr. cut these and my father shaved them off with a broad axe. I have two in my collection. My grandfather had one and my father had one 'cause if you're left-handed the handle is all set so you don't hit your knuckles when you use it. You stand on one side of the log and you trim the other side. Of course when my grandfather did it in the woods you used an adze first to flatten it, four sides and then uh you'd use the broad axe to bring it to size but that's how they did all those barns before the sawmill came.

Rob: Well, we want to thank you very much Lawrence for talking to us – telling us about your life in Stillwater.

Lawrence: If you haven't had a chance to look through that uh thick book – it's six hundred pages – be sure that you do it because you'll be educated about Stillwater. Tells you in there about uh when the first bicycles came to Stillwater, the first car that came. It was a big event – the first car that came through Stillwater. It also tells about that bridge down there. Fellow had four horses and a big load of grain. He goes over this wood bridge and it collapses – oh your familiar with that?

Jan: I know about that.

Lawrence: And in four months they put up a new bridge – an iron bridge with abutments and everything. It took four years down here.

Jan: For that silly thing they put up.

Lawrence: In those days they just...

[Tape cuts off.]