

Historical Commission of Schuylkill Township
Oral History Project

Helen McAleer



***Summary.** Helen McAleer has lived in the same house on Oakwood Lane since 1946. In addition to her personal history, topics discussed with Mrs. McAleer include such things as the changes on Mount Misery and Mount Misery, the Valley Park./Jug Hollow area, horse farms, hunting and horse shows, and the Valley Forge Springs. Mrs. McAleer once met Amelia Earhart and has an interesting story to tell about Lassie. Two interviews.*

1st interview (final revision) - August 26, 2004
Interviewed by Nancy Loane
Transcribed by Michelle Torres

Good morning! This is Nancy Loane. It's August the 26th, 2004. I'll be interviewing Helen McAleer for the oral history project of the Historical Commission of Schuylkill Township.

N: I understand that you have lived in this house for quite some time. Could you tell me something about this house?

H: This house was built sometime between 1800 and 1830. It belonged to a man named Samuel Pollock, who came from the same small village in Ireland that Robinson, the Acme store president came from. Ballygo, or something like that, in Ireland. Mr. Pollack was a gardener. Had been a gardener all his life. I mean, for other people, you know. He had bought this little place and lived here with his daughter and her family.

She had married and had three children and he was selling the place because they built another house. It's down on the left side on the other side of the road (Oakwood Lane). We bought the place for \$2,400.

N: And when was this again?

H: 1946. We moved in August 10, 1946. Of course, I was pregnant. Hughie had just come home from the South Pacific, and we were waiting for a baby at Christmas time. The baby was born a few days after Christmas.

N: What was the property like when you moved in?

H: Well, there was a little barn, not really anything, just enough to have a horse that would have taken the family to church and the store, and so on. A little barn, not in very good repair and we took it down the first year we lived here. It was right out near the road, which was where you put the barn, you know. It was like the garages in town, they're really near the street, 'cause that's where you put them. ...

N: Makes sense.

H: Anyway, our friends Ethel and Elmer Hopwood knew about the place and we bought it, as I say, for \$2,400.

N: And you had the barn. How much acreage was there?

H: Just short of 7, 6.8 or 6.7, something like that and that was it. But it was fully woods. Mr. Pollock used to raise celery.

N: Celery?

H: Celery. Celery's not too easy to grow, you know. Like everything else there's a little bit of an art to it. Anyway, he did that. They never farmed or did anything else. They never had any horses on the place or anything else.

They had been here, I guess, I don't even know how long. Seven, eight years, maybe. He had worked over on the Main Line for Mrs. Browning. Come over here and bought this house. I don't know how he happened to get it. He was a very courtly gentleman.

My mother and father were here with us. And Mr. Pollack would come up and see my mother. And he would say that he was on his way down to see Miss Marsh. Miss Marsh lived in the old house below Hope Lane, the next driveway in on the left hand side ("Chips" at 120 Oakwood Lane). He would go down to see Miss Marsh. Miss Marsh was an elderly lady, I think probably a Philadelphian, an old Philadelphia family, and had been a social worker. She lived there with a companion. And he would say to mother, "But I don't want to go down too early because the ladies will still be in their dishabilles."

N: What were the other properties like around here? Were they farms? Were there...

H: A lot of them were woodlots. This is unusual because there was so much frontage. I guess the town people would buy some acreage or had it and they used that as woodlots and cut down trees to burn. And you know, that's still done in Germany. Did you know that the Pennsylvania Smelting Company was right across the road?

N: No.

H: Located just across the road.

N: What was the Pennsylvania Smelting Co.?

H: They used the ore from the mines. Did you know there were many mines around here?

N: Were they right in this area?

H: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Right beside Maggie's and Andy's lane (142 Oakwood) was Mine Road. And that ran right down until it came out on Jug Hollow Road. Not too far away. And that was the Jug Hollow Mine.

This area is full of mines, you know. There were many mines in this area. Over behind what was the original Pickering Hunt Club on Creek Road was a whole field of little surface mines. We used to ride through there and every so often, you know, every 50 feet or so, there would be a heap of slag and dirt that had been dug up from whatever they had. Copper, zinc, lead. I never heard of any gold or silver.

N: What were they mining right here?

H: I'm not sure. Whether it was lead or what it was, I don't know. There is a book about Chester County Mines. I don't have it. I always wished I could get a hold of that book and really, you know, read about it. If you do...

N: I'll let you know! Ok, so in this area, then, all around were mine shafts?

H: Well, that's what's happened, you know, to ...Did you know Joel Adams? (148 Oakwood Lane.) Well, the house he lived in had been built on spec and then something happened to the contractor, and he just gutted it and left it. And then Adams came along and bought it. They lived in it for awhile but then part of it sank. They had to fill it up. Very expensive. It's for sale again.

N: Yes...the area around here has changed a lot. No more wooded lots and mines. When did it start to change?

H: After the Second World War, and, of course, after we came here. There were about eleven or twelve property owners on the road (Oakwood Lane). You didn't know that this road was Irish Road?

N: Irish Road because of the...?

H: Irish immigrants that came in to work in the mines. Because many of them were short, and the horizontal shafts were small.

N: So what we now call Oakwood Lane, was Irish...

H: First it was, I believe, Irish Row and actually some of those descendants still live down in the village. People wanted to get the name changed because they were prejudiced against the Irish.

Well, you know Philadelphia was full of that. Do you know the story about the Irish need not apply? It would be very hard for the Irish to be accepted because they couldn't disguise their accents. So they couldn't really pass very easily. It all happened during the 1840s.

N: 1840s. Ok, so it was Irish Road and then it changed to Oakwood in...?

H: I don't know when. Somewhere during the '50s.

N: How about Jug Hollow? Was that always Jug Hollow?

H: That was always Jug Hollow, yes. And you know there are two theories about that. One is that the road is like a jug handle. And the other was the local residents would go to bed in the wintertime with a jug of hooch.

N: Ok. Now I noticed down on Jug Hollow there looks to be, on the right hand side as you are going down the road from Oakwood, a little springhouse or something?

H: That's a springhouse.

N: How recently did they use it?

H: I'm not sure – the 60s or 70s. And there was a watering trough, And that was a common thing too, both in towns and in the cities to water the horses who pulled the trolleys and the other horses. There was available water in all the cities up until the time the watering troughs were abandoned. There was one on Clothier Springs

Road with the running water that ran all year 'round. And that was where the people from Phoenixville and the surrounding area would come with their jugs and get the water.

N: Hum. I'm going to shift the topic for a moment. When did Continental Drive go in?

H: I'm not sure. In the 60s. Do you know the little old house that's in there (the Continental Drive development, 135 Continental Drive)? That was Mrs. Aschmann's. I don't know whose it was before her, but anyway, she raised collies and cairns. And, actually, she may have had one of the original dogs that was used as a model for Lassie. Because the man who wrote the story of Lassie lived down here at the corner of Clothier Springs and Jug, and um, what is the road that runs horizontally here? Valley Park. And she raised collies and cairns. Both Scottish breeds.

N: And did she own all that property around there?

H: Not a great deal of it. I don't know just how big that place was. But the driveway went in from here, up from our road and down to her, back to her house.

I don't know if there was any relative of the Binns who were the original developer of Valley Forge Mountain, which, of course, is a terrible... I don't recognize it.

N: You don't recognize Valley Forge Mountain?

H: No, no.

N: Tell me about that. What do you mean?

H: We were here before that. It was not a mountain. It was Mount Misery. It was Mount Misery.

N: That's right. Mount Joy and Mount Misery. So, Binns was one of the original developers of Valley Forge Mountain? And that had that been just woodland?

H: Yes, just woodland. I don't think there were any farms up there at all, or if there were, they would be just a little place like this - 5,6,7 acres - that somebody would have cleared the land and built something. There were a few houses up there, but just a few.

And the road went in from the top of Diamond Rock Hill and we used to walk back there and pick blueberries.

N: And so that went in when? About the '50s also?

H: Yes. '50s and earlier.

N: It looks like different developers went in and built different kinds of houses.

H: Yes, yes, yes. As a matter of fact, it was Paul Lehman, who was a Merchant Marine, who had made quite a bit of money, but he did not own the original part of Valley Forge Mountain. He had an option on it. He had an option on a great deal of the land. Now there were mines and there was a little train, a little choo-choo railroad line that came down from the mines up there. It came all the way down, crossed Route 23, I think around where the Methodist Church is, and moved below that.

N: Oh, how wonderful! So we have mines in this area around Oakwood Lane and certainly mines up the mountain.

H: All over Chester County there were mines. I'm sure you could get a copy of the book.

N: Oh, the book on Chester County Mines, yes. Let me think... What was the village of Valley Forge like years ago?.

H: Well, there was a forge. A forge that was down on the creek, you know. And so, of course, that would have been sort of a center for the local farmers when a wheel broke, a wagon wheel, the plow needed to be mended. A forge was a very important part of a community, not only to shoe the horses so that you had some transportation, and keep your transportation going, but also to mend the carriage or the wagon, or whatever it was that you were prosperous enough to drive.

N: Are you familiar at all with any of the other industries that were down there? Textiles, I had heard, at one point.

H: Yes, there is a textile mill. No, I am not familiar with it. It was connected with one of the old ladies that lived in one of the big houses on the north side of route 23. A couple of the houses are gone. There was a whole line of them coming up from the creek. I know of two that were gone, and they were big, old Victorian, early Victorian-type houses. And one old lady that lived in there, her family had had one of the textile industries. I don't know anything about it.

N: I guess the textile mill closed years ago. And a school? Where did everybody go to school?

H: Well, there was a two-room school up about where the post office is now, in that area. We had meetings there.

Shortly after we came, Hughie was asked to join the Valley Forge Improvement Association. And the idea of the Improvement Association, and maybe the remnant's still around with some of the people, was to get a fire engine. And I think that the first one they bought was - now somebody else probably knows because it was a little beyond my wanting to know anything about it - but they did get an old one, like maybe something from the '20s or something, an old engine and rebuilt it.

And Mr. Caughey, that's C-A-U-G-H-E-Y, he was a Canadian who owned the Valley Forge Springs and sold the water throughout, I think, Norristown and some of the Main Line, the bottled water.

N: Please tell me something about Valley Forge Springs.

H: Well, let me see where it's located. Most of it is taken down. It was quite a big building and had a huge fireplace. I think the name of the man from whom Mr. Caughey had bought the business was Barr. I'm not quite sure but I think it was Barr. And he had collected stones from all over the country, so he was very proud of the fireplace - there were stones from every state.

N: And where was this located?

H: Oh, the little house is there, the little cottage, but most of it is gone. As you go down Valley Park from the post office, it's on the left hand side before the fire company. A little cottage is left, which I guess was the original cottage, but there was a big, ongoing business. I mean several trucks, delivery trucks, and regular routes and so on.

There's a woman named Angie Maine. Now she must be about my age, and she lived with her mother and her aunt in the little house this side of Oakwood below Hope Lane.

Angie Maine's mother was a little bit of a woman, and her sister was big. But they had lived in that house and walked to Phoenixville every week for years and years and years. Never had a telephone for years and years. They each had a child. And one of the aunts had a son, and he worked for Mr. Caughey for Valley Forge Springs all his life. He was a drinker. I don't think he ever married or anything, I don't know that. But anyway, and they were all named Maine. But Angie, I could probably get you in touch with Angie.

N: That would be great if you could.

H: She's very reserved. Very, very reserved. Worked all her life in some kind of a clerical job, I don't know what. (Telephones Angie Main, but the phone is disconnected.)

There are also the McIntyres down in Jug Hollow. They've been around here for generations. And there's Freddie, who was not as old as I am, he would be about the age of my children, I guess, and his aunt. There's a couple of women down there that belong to the McIntyre family that if they would talk but they might helpful. If you ever got them to talk they would not shut up.

N: Which homes do they live in?

H: You know the big house, the fairly big house on the left hand side as you get down Jug Hollow before Valley Park (35 Jug Hollow) . That was a family home. It's before you get to where the dormitory was, the long house that's down there.

N: The dormitory?

H: The long house on the right side of the road (40 Jug Hollow) as you go down Jug Hollow before Valley Park. Well, I've always thought of it as being a dormitory. I think it was connected with the mill.

Ed Ray used to live there. Ed Ray was a character. He was a woodsman, a lumberman. Had one leg. I don't know how he lost it. May have heard how he lost it, I don't know. When they used to sprinkle the cinders on the roads, you know, in the ice and snow, he always sat on the back of the truck and spread them out.

His sister was a very, very well put-together, very sophisticated-looking woman who had some connection with the frozen pie in the red box that you get at Acme. But Ed's long gone. They're all long gone. All the interesting people. Ed was a character.

N: We're glad that you're still here.

H: Oh! I don't know. That's a shame about Angie 'cause I think she was very quiet. I think she was quite intelligent, and she walked to town, you know, every Saturday. She got groceries and then took a taxi back. And then eventually she got a car. I don't know whether the aunt ever learned to drive, ever had a car. But they were very reclusive, and they lived down the hollow. I don't know who lives there now.

Did you know the fire company used to have a horse show? The fire company put on a horse show for a number of years. A very good little horse show. Awfully good for green horses. A lot of my friends used to bring their horses here, because it was a Valley Forge show....

N: How long did this go on?

H: Oh, '50s, '60s, '70s Al Steiert's property went almost down to the fire station. Al was not a native. Al's family manufactured brooms. Big, commercial brooms for the streets and that sort of thing. And they had a company over in Hatfield and they lived where the old 202 was. Very nice, sort of a Federalist house, big three story house. Al's father fox hunted with what they always called a farmer's pack. It was not one of the recognized by Pickering or Radnor or Rosetree. But they got some good hunting. Sylvester Quigley, did you ever come across Sylvester Quigley?

N: No.

H: He's been dead a number of years, too. Sylvester was the Chester County Construction Company. He always hunted with the farmers back then. At one point he was Master of the fox hounds for Pickering.

Do you know what's happening now in England? Foxes are coming into town because they no longer hunt. Foxhunting has been abolished and the foxes are coming into town. Do you know what a fox can do to a henhouse? Decimate it, because they're predators. There was a purpose in foxhunting. ... Ok, that's my lecture!

N: Did you participate in the hunts here?

H: Yes, I hunted. And my girls, you know, now my, let me boast a little: my oldest grandson is going to be 30 in September. But just to digress and tell you, he writes and produces the news for CBS radio in New York City. He wanted to be a newsman from the time he was 9 years old, and he made it. And Eileen, his mother, and I would like to have seen him, you know, on some little paper in East Podunk somewhere, but he's found his way.

He's married for 5 years. He married a schoolteacher and they bought a house in West Orange. Of course, he's right outside the city. And she teaches in a school district there that has not changed in their demographics, they've not changed in years and years and years. You know, the suburbs in New Jersey were built years, a hundred years or more ago. She teaches there. I think she teaches fourth grade, fifth grade, something like that. You know, one of the grades where teachers do make a difference. She had a luncheon not too long ago. It was amusing because most of her friends were, you know, some relatives and some were her coworkers and they're all very positive women. Positive and enjoy themselves. ... Eileen took them all to Germany this year. Rob and Michelle and Andrew and his girlfriend. Why I'm digressing with that is that Andrew's girlfriend (Tanya) is an environmental lawyer, as is he, and Andrew went out to Oregon to Lewis and Clark, and that's where he got his degree and passed the bar in California in environmental law.

N: Outstanding! Do you have two or three children?

H: I had four children. We had four children. Three girls, one of whom lives in the house, Jeannie; Eileen, she lives over in Glen Mills; and Maggie and Andy who built the house below here. And then my son who flew the coop and went to Atlanta and met a lovely girl, lovely, lovely young woman. They bought a house. They lived just on the outskirts of Atlanta for years and then they bought a house 50 miles below Atlanta. They travel back and forth every day, both he and Cathy. He said, "Mom, do you know why I bought it here? It looks like home." ... So anyway, that's where they ended up.

N: And then you have grandchildren...

H: I have eight. I have six grandsons and two granddaughters.

Jean lives here. Alice, her sister is out at Indiana University.

We have six grandsons, including Rob and Andrew. And the reason Eileen took them to Germany is that she and Bruce lived there for 6 1/2 years. Rob was born and lived there. So she took them all this summer and they spent a week near Munich.....

N: I know that you were busy raising your family and did some foxhunting. Can you tell me some more about yourself?

H: Now, I was born in Buffalo. My father was a professional horseman, like his father before him. And he was the only one who followed that life. His two sisters became nurses, one of whom was one of the first three—one died in training—but Mary Helen was one of the first three Red Cross nurses to go abroad during the First World War, and she nursed during the Battle of Verdun.

But anyway, I don't know how my father got to Buffalo. My mother was Scot and her father had died of smallpox, which was unusual. So my mother left her home. She was raised in the border country of Scotland and in 1911 she came to Canada, to Halifax, and she worked. She worked in the Governor's Palace. I don't know what she did. There are gaps; you don't think to ask. She had distant cousins here. Her grandmother was a Hamilton and there were Hamilton cousins in Canada, because we used to visit them all the time. Anyway, I don't know how they both got to Buffalo, but they did and they were not young. They were both in their middle thirties, which was sort of unusual.

N: They were in their middle thirties when they got married?

H: Yes, and they had me.

N: Then your husband was a horseman, too?

H: No, nothing to do with it.

His father, he was Philadelphia. Did I tell you? I don't know whether I mentioned it. I did a little oral history. I recorded some things from my mother-in-law. Her father got married when he was 76 for the last time, third time. He didn't go back to Ireland to get that wife. The other two he'd gone back to Ireland to get them. But he had come to this country to be a prizefighter. He had huge hands, very shapely hands, but very big hands. He was very slight, but he was very strong. Then he owned property up and down the Main Line and farms. He had dairy farms. The Leopard—do you know where the Leopard is? The other side of Berwyn ?

N: No.

H: The children went to school there. They had a house back there. They had a farm back there on Buttonwood Road. They went to school at the Leopard School.....

N: Oh, I'm sorry. The tape is running out.....we'll have to continue this later. Thank you!

Interview #2 (final revision) – December 9, 2004

Interviewed by Nancy Loane

Transcribed by Nancy Loane

HMc: I was born on April 5, 1919. My mother was a Scot who had emigrated in 1911 to Canada, to Halifax. I don't know what she did, but she worked at the Governor's Palace at Calgary. I just don't know what she did. She had all the household skills, and it was probably as a domestic cook, or she sewed. She did everything. She would have had all of those skills. She could put on everything from a formal dinner to a casual affair.

Let me go back just a little...

I was looking for my grandfather's picture. He and his bride came to this country between 1885 and 1890. He was hired in Ireland. They didn't have to go through Ellis Island or the immigration because he was hired before he left. He had one particular skill – he drove four-in-hand. He was hired by the Belmont's – Belmont Race Track. I never saw any of these grandparents. When they came to this country, they didn't go to the tenant house on the estate. The Belmont's built a house for them in the town – in Lawrence, LI. They went right into an independent house.

NL: The Belmont's had built this for them?

HMc: The Belmonts built this. My grandfather had a particular skill. He was quite good looking. I wish I could put my hands on the picture. The picture that I have – he is standing with his vest, very dapper. And he evidently always dressed this way. He was very proper. They had four boys and two girls. One girl was Mary Helen – their name was Lynch, that was my maiden name. My father followed horses. None of the other boys did – one was a pharmacist, and one of the others did something else. But anyway, my father did follow the horses.

The two girls went into St. Joseph's Hospital, which is now in New York City to train. Aunt May went on to become one of the first three Red Cross nurses to go into France during the First World War during the battle of Verdun. The day before they were to set sail - they were to go to London, and then on to France – a man who was the head of the committee got in touch with them. He said that, in light of the sinking of the Luisitania, if they did not want to chance it, they did not have to. But she did go.

Another p.s. to that story: We lived in East Aurora, which is outside of Buffalo, in an very outstanding little community. I am sure that my life would have turned out very differently if we had stayed there. That is the home of Bard College and any number of things there.

My life would have been very different if we would have stayed there. I had access to everything that wealth brought. I didn't know I wasn't a little rich girl. I didn't know. The estate we lived on belonged to Seymour H. Knox. He was not only big in horses, he was president of the Polo Association. He had a polo field on the place and was a ten goal polo player. It must have been about 2,000 acres. This was outside of Buffalo. The money came not only from Knox gelatin, but also from the Woolworth family. It was about a 2,000 acre place. And his sister, Mrs. Goodyear, who probably was related to the tire people, too, used to spend a lot of time there. And when the Goodyear children, who were the same age or a little older than me, when they imported a swimming teacher to teach them swimming, I was there.

My father loved the theater. I was taken to the theater as a young child. My first musical that I have any memory of was with Fred Stone, who means nothing to you, but he was famous those days in musical comedy. I saw him in "Crisscross" in Buffalo.

NL: What did your father do on the estate?

HMc: He managed the horses. There were many polo ponies. For polo you have to have a stand of horses.

NL: What does that mean – “a stand?”

HMc: You can't have one polo pony. Because in a game you will change mounts numerous times. If they get hurt, of course. It's a pretty rough sport. But very gentlemanly and so on.

Anyway, I was exposed to that. The house we lived in was like an individual house. It was on the estate road, with its own entry way. I have never been back. Since I was ten, I have never been back.

NL: Have you wanted to go back?

HMc: Yes. Hughie said that we would go. But it never happened.

There were polo fields; there were jumping rings. They had their own ice house on the estate. Their own dairy. Milk and cream was delivered every day. It was a lovely life.

NL: What about schooling?

HMc: I went to East Aurora Public Schools. I remember when mother took me to kindergarten. It was in a house. The school was in a self-contained building. Very proper. Something like Barkley School as I remember. It was red brick – many classrooms. I received the first grade reading prize! I suppose it went up to high school, I don't know. I didn't have any knowledge of that. We left when I was nine.

NL: Why did you leave?

HMc: My father lost his job. I don't know. What did he do, I don't know. I don't know. That's when we came to Pennsylvania. At the Knox estate he handled all of the fox hunting, showing, horse showing and the foaling. He had had experience in the qualifying as a young man, because in 1916 he went down to Mexico and brought back a load of horses for the qualifying, including the wetbacks that went underneath the horses. That is the story he told. What he did, I don't know.

We also went to South Carolina in the winter, because that is great horse county, for the hunting. The horses traveled in Pullman cars! I don't know what happened....

NL: What did he do when he came to Pennsylvania?

HMc: See, he always had the appearance, he had the knowledge, he had the skills. He worked for the department store owner in Pittsburgh, who owned Fallingwaters.

NL: Oh, Fallingwaters, from Frank Lloyd Wright...

HMc: That is who Daddy came to work for. In Pittsburgh. We lived outside Pittsburgh. That is where I met Amelia Earhart.

There was a little airport – a little town outside Pittsburgh – called Aspinwall. Dirt road. And there was an airport there. Amelia Earhart and her co-pilot were flying across country. You can find this in biographies. The airplane was not badly damaged, but it dipped down and damaged one of the wings. So the airport was so small that they didn't even have a telephone. But this was early – 1928. She came to our house to telephone.

NL: Do you have any recollection of her?

HMc: Yes, I do. I was sneaking around her – I remember being quiet. Mother served her tea – and the co-pilot. . And they called for help to come. They needed repairs. I don't know how long she was there. I just remember that one afternoon.

Then there was a man named Doug Ness, who was, like Daddy, a horseman. They decided that Daddy would come on here to the Malvern area for the Radnor Hunt and the people with that and deal with horses. Of course, then 1929 came along, and horses that had been priced at \$1,500-2,500 were sold for \$125.

NL: The whole thing fell down.

HMc: Yes, it did. I'm sure it affected the Knoxes not at all, because they were so vastly wealthy. Many of the people who didn't have that kind of backlog of money, lost everything. There were personal circumstances in my family that – we were very much affected by it.

My mother was Scots, as I said, and she was raised in the Calvinist tradition. When all of these things happened, it affected us so. My mother set up housekeeping thirteen times that I have counted. Thirteen times. Never were the shades not put up the first night, the dishes all put away. She was very little – only 4'10" – but had vast energy and goodwill.

NL: A lot of determination.

HMc: She came to this country after her father died, and her father died of smallpox. It is hard to understand, because it was 1911, and the vaccination was common. My grandfather was a railroad engineer – I can show you the picture.

This is my mother's family. There were ten of them.

NL: Nice looking family.

HMc: My grandmother looked like Queen Victoria, with the same kind of presence. The dressmaker would come – they were not wealthy at all – but they were always dressed.

NL: They were well turned out.

HMc: The boots were always shined. The dressmaker would come and they would buy the material, and there would be dresses made for the year.

NL: Ok. So here you are in Malvern...then what happened?

HMc: As I told you, mother set up housekeeping twelve, thirteen different times. I finished up 8th grade in Kennett Square. And then we went to Berwyn. At that point – this was in the 30s – Daddy again had pneumonia. He had had pneumonia several times, because evidently the whole Lynch family didn't have good lungs. And always smokers. Anyway, he had to be taken to Chester County Hospital. At that point they had developed a vaccine, a horse serum, and he was treated with that. It cured the pneumonia, but for more than a year he had a terrible side effect. He was covered with boils all over. Talk about Job!

You didn't know you were going to get all of this, did you?

NL: No, I did not. Boils!

HMc: And carbuncles on the back of his legs. For the rest of his life he had these terrible scars. At that point, he lost the job. We moved to Berwyn. And that was where I met Hughie, on the front porch. He in his knickers. We rented a house from Hughie's grandfather, Chris McDonald.

Now he had come to America as a prizefighter. He had very large hands. He wasn't a beefy man, he was very tall, he was a prizefighter. Old Chris had dairy farms all over Chester County. And the saying went, it was quicker to move than to pay rent.

Anyway, Chris owned a lot of property in Berwyn, down to Strafford, up to Glen Lockh. Matter of fact, when he got married for the third time – each of the other two times he went back to Ireland to get a bride. The third time he got one right here who had come over from Ireland. So he saved his transportation money.

Anyway, he was a flirt. He built a honeymoon cottage right down in Strafford, down where Hughie lived. Of course they were all Chris' property.

NL: Humm. Now you and Hughie meet. Was it like, "Wow?"

HMc: No, he would just come around and see me. We would go and sit in my father's car and talk.

NL: How long between when you were introduced and you got married?

HMc: I guess about eleven or twelve years. We were thirteen when we met.

NL: And then, what happened then? You settled down somewhere? You moved around the country?

HMc: Mother, daddy and I moved from Berwyn over here to Schuylkill Township, on the Clothier place. Hughie worked for Bill Clothier. Not for the hunt club, but for Bill Clothier personally. My father, Thomas Robert Lynch, handled a lot of the hunt horses for him. We have been around hunting for many years.

Then we went up to Reading. He worked for the Thune family and their son....

NL: Where did you get married?

HMc: In Ridley Park. In St. Sophie's. I had been working at the telephone company. That was when if you worked for the telephone company and you were in the business office, you had to have a degree. They wanted girls with some college. I didn't have any college. My particular job, when the war started, was to explain to people why they couldn't get telephone service. Before then, after the telephone had become prominent, it was all selling. Selling from the multi-party line, down to the four party line, to the two party line and of course the individual line.

But anyway, when the war started, because of the war effort, there was a saying, "Lucky Strike is going to war." Lucky Strike used to have a green package; there was a lot of green on the circle. Then, when the war started, they stopped making the traditional package. Really, these things are all true! You don't hear about these things, do you?

NL: I don't quite get the Lucky Strike green goes to war – they changed the color, why?

HMc: Because there was something about the green coloring. Whatever they used before became scarce.

NL: And this is World War II. Now you are working for the telephone company, and you are telling people they can't have telephones.

HMc: I went to work for them in 1941 or '42, I guess.

NL: And Hughie overseas, I guess, right?

HMc: We were married in '43, and he was sent to the South Pacific. He was gone somewhat over two years. Because of our association with the people here, our great and good friends – my great and good friends – were Ethel and Elmer Hopwood. Elmer Hopwood had started out as a young man working with his grandfather who was a carpenter. And then he became a chauffeur for the Clothier family.

On the Clothier place there would be the Clothier big house, called the Lodge. The Clothiers were deeply into tennis. Bill Clothier had been a noted tennis player at the time of Bill Tilden. Have you ever heard of Bill Tilden? He, of course, in later years – it was such a scandal because he was gay. The word was not even used then .

Anyway, the Clothiers built the Lodge when they were first establishing the place. It was on a hill. It was really a lodge type of building. Big room downstairs. A big dormitory upstairs, because they used to have mini-tournaments there. There was tennis, too, down at the Merion Cricket Club in Ardmore. Don Budge was quite often a guest. This was in the last 30s and early 40s. What happened to that was that the Lodge burned down. They always blamed the butler, because it started in the dining room after a party. It destroyed it. What is there now is not exactly a reproduction, and it wasn't the original size. By that time Mrs. Clothier was ill.

Young Bill's son, who was never a junior, because junior had been one of their children and he died early, so this was young Bill – he died within the past year and one-half, I guess. He lived over there in Valley Hill Farm. He started out as a G-man. The FBI.

Anyway, back to *me*, if you want to go back to *me*.

Hughie came home in late October, and of course we immediately started a baby. Our first baby was born in 1946. Eileen – who is named after me. Eileen is the Irish version of Helen. And then we had Jeannie. I can show you some very dirty, dirty pictures – I mean that they are just plain dusty.

NL: I was going to say...

HMc: Yesterday I went to a fashion show, and all three of my girls were with me. It's fun to do that. People commented on how lucky I am. (Shows photograph.)

NL: Yes, yes, yes. Oh look...

HMc: Eileen, Jeannie, Hughie and Maggie. ...This is Maggie's family... We had six weddings at the house. The ceremonies were in church. We made all the dresses. My sister-in-law and I.... Jeannie was May Queen in 8th grade.

This is Rob, who is my oldest grandson.... He just turned 30. He was born in Germany. Bruce and Eileen were in Germany for about 6 ½ years. Bruce worked for an electronics firm that had a government contract with the German air force. They hired Americans because it took over two years to train people to repair the computers they were working on. The conscription time for the Germans air force was two years. It was cheaper for them

to hire outside help. It was a fascinating time for Eileen and Bruce. It was never-never-land. They could go to the coast to France for the weekend.

NK: Did you ever go to visit?

HMc: Yes, a few times. Once before Eileen gave birth to Rob, and then I was there when he was born. She took a long time to have that baby – weeks and weeks. My trip had to be extended. Hughie came over for the christening. Rob is the one now that writes the news for CBS in NYC. He has been doing it a couple of years.

NL: You have six grandsons. What are they doing?

HMc: Rob is in the news. Andrew, his brother, passed the bar in California. He went out to Lewis and Clark. He's an environmental lawyer, so he is never going to make any money. He has an interesting girlfriend, I think they work for the same law firm. A year ago I was at Rob and Michelle's house for Thanksgiving dinner and Tonya was there. She made her own tofu turkey.

NL: So that is two grandsons.

HMc: Hughie has two boys. He lives in Zebulon, Georgia. Kathy was a resident of Atlanta and Jonesboro. Jonesboro is where the scenes around the station in *Gone With the Wind* were shot.

NL: How old are those children?

HMc: There are 21, 22. They go to Georgia Southern. It is like Georgia Tech.

Jeannie has a daughter, Jean, who lives here.

(End of side 1)

HMc: Dallas is at Indiana University State School. The other thing that Indiana, the town is famous for is Jimmy Stewart, whose father owned the hard ware store in town.

And Maggie was twin boys, 13 years old. They are handsome and loving. They are sweet boys. Maggie has her degree in vocal. Her instructor had taught Aretha Franklin. She told us that Maggie would not reach her full power in voice until 34 or 35. That's a long time to be dedicated to something. Maggie is very competitive and does many things. The boys sing at the chapel. They are thirteen.

NL: It's getting close to 5 o'clock and we need to stop around then. But before we do stop – horses have played a big part in your life. Can you just talk a little bit about the importance of horses to you and to your family?

HMc: Well, they were our livelihood, obviously for generations back. People will ask me, "When did your children first become interested in riding?" Generations ago. Yes, my father was a skilled horseman. His father came to this country because of horses. My mother's family had nothing to do horses – they were all shipbuilders, because they lived on the River Clyde. And Jeannie, our second daughter, is the image of my father on a horse. Where I came to realize that – she was teaching up in Massachusetts in a private school up there. They advertised in a national magazine – a horse magazine. They had an ad there of Jeannie and another girl. And I thought, "Oh my. That's my father." She has the same lean build. What she is doing now is teaching therapeutic riding at Hope Springs and working for Devereaux in Phoenixville.

NL: What about you, yourself, and horses?

HMc: I rode all the time when I was a youngster. Then when my children came along – and I was telling them about this not too long ago – the first pony I bought for them was with \$175.00 that was in my father's pocket when he died. Ethel Hopwood and I went to an auction in Doylestown, and that's where we bought Teddy. Elmer Hopwood, by the way, became a contractor. His grandfather built the original township building.

The girls were eight, nine - that age. If the pony would have been too much for them, I could have gotten on – the pony could carry a great deal of weight, and I wasn't that large.

They both, of course, took to it. Eileen is very elegant on a horse. She rode sidesaddle very beautifully. Maggie, too, is a good rider. They are all competitive. Jeannie, particularly, is very competitive. But they took care of the pony. We had a ramshackle barn on the property – the first barn we built cost me \$600.00. The planks were from the floor of a mill that was going out of business in Spring City. The big planks were big, heavy pieces of wood. So that's what the basic barn is down there. That's why it is 16 by 32 – because the planks were that size. The original barn is still there.

NL: Did you always live in this house? The girls grew up here....

HMc: Because my life had been broken up many times, I was very proud of the fact that they never had to move. They never had to move.

NL: How about your involvement in Pony Club?

HMc: That came through Al Steiert, who was down the road. A lot of people thought he had a bad reputation - he was a show-off. He loved spring, because then people would come down in a Saturday afternoon, on a Sunday afternoon, and he would get out some horse that he was training and show-off. I've seen him do such marvelous things. At one point another friend I had known – she had ridden for Daddy when she was a girl – as a matter of fact Wilda used to live on the Orner farm right below us here. She had ridden circus horses, all kinds of horses – a very good rider. When the girls got to be in their teens... I always kept in touch with Wilda. I went to her and sent the girls up there to learn Western riding.

NL: Did all of the girls ride in competitions?

HMc: Yes they did.

NL: Where did they compete?

HMc: Valley Forge had a wonderful little horse show. We have friends in Virginia – Gene Suarez is a darling man and very, very funny. He's of Mexican descent. And he at one point was in charge of all the reservations – Indian reservations – all over the country. He then and a friend had a VW. They would buy a hundred pounds of corn. Take it down, process it, make it into tortillas, and sell it. They built this into a million dollar business. At the same time they were working for the government. They had wonderful southwestern restaurant near Vienna, Virginia.

NL: So the girls would compete all over? You mentioned Valley Forge.

HMc: In Valley Forge back of the fire company. These were on a Sunday. They were low key. Annie Zimmerman came with her kids. They came from all over the countryside. Because it was fun. It was a very

good step for people starting out. Kids starting out. Grown-ups starting out. There are still many of these horse shows. Many people remember this Valley Forge Horse Show with great fondness.

NL: When did that close?

HMc: A good fifteen years ago. I guess, about fifteen years ago.

NL: Did the girls ever ride at Devon?

HMc: Yes. Yes.

NL: What was that like?

HMc: Jeannie had an Olympic horse. A horse named Chikola. Again, one of our friends, a British-American girl named Penny DePeyer, lived around here and we saw a great deal of her. She worked for Al Steiert for a little bit, and then she worked for the Radnor Hunt Club. Then she went and worked for the United States Equestrian Team.

At that point all the Americans thought that they had to have foreign horses. Now they, of course, raise their own. But still a lot of people go back to buying the warm-bloods. The warm-bloods are the equivalent of a thoroughbred, which is built for speed – a horse built for speed. . There were three stallions...they are the base of the thoroughbred racing horses now. This goes back to the 1700s. Every horse in the thoroughbred line goes back to these three horses.. Of course we have many famous American horses, too.

Sometimes they go back to buy a warm-blood – that would be like a Dutch or German or the Hanovarian horse. Al Steiert had a famous Hanovarian that he had bought in Germany. He went out into the field and found this horse. He did wonderful things with this horse. It became a breeding bonanza. People expected great things from being bred to Abundance, which was his name. Al had built another stable, besides the old stable. There were two big double doors, he could open the door, and Abundance could put his head out into the tack room. He was a dear, dear horse. One of the biggest thrills I had was driving Abundance one day.

NL: Did Jeannie ride Abundance at Devon?

HMc: No. There was a horse that the Australian team took to the Tokyo Olympics. He was so forward moving. The US team bought him. Penny had gone over to work for the team, which was at the point in northern New Jersey. They decided to sell him. Because he was too much. One of the girls on the team at that point, she was a competitive rider, one day could not control him, and when she got off the grass stains were on the side of her britches. Anyway, he came home here.

Actually, Lockie Richards, who worked around here and had a teaching business, Lockie said that Chakola had come from the same kind of the back yard operation that we had. Chakola came here and Jeannie fox hunted him, and she had him with Maggie on a lead line with her pony, showed him, won the A-Nationals. It's a three day competition for Pony Clubbers, and it goes in levels. The lowest that you can go in on is a D, that's 6 or 7 years old and it goes on up. You get out of Pony Club when you are 21. The A Nationals used to be a real big thing. Now the kids get their A's earlier. They have to take a national test. All our girls are A's. That is unusual. There is one other family with three A's.

NL: Interesting! You talk of the Steiert property. Where was that property?

HMc: Who is the big real estate man? Piazza. That was the property. That property had belonged to a business in Phoenixville. Then it was bought by a retired army man. And then Al and Ann bought that place. Their Eileen and our Eileen were the same age. They went to school together.

NL: Where did your kids go to school?

HMc: They started out at Schuylkill. Then the two older ones went down to Bishop Kendrick.

NL: We're near the end of the tape, and it's five o'clock. Thank you!