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## **A note about transcriptions:**

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Interview by Steven Schoenherr, July 24, 1973, 3:30-5:00 p.m. in Milford, Delaware, with M. Catherine Downing, founder and vice president of Milford Historical Society.

Q I understand that you're connected with the historical society. Is this correct?

A Yes, that is right. I was the first president and one of the founders, and I started at the top and I'm working my way down. I'm vice president now.

Q Do you meet every month or so?

A No, actually the whole society does not meet at all because our members are really not interested in attending meetings. The people who belong are members primarily because they are interested in the work we do. They have enough meetings of other organizations--church circles, civic clubs, so forth. So the business is handled by a board of twelve trustees who do meet monthly. That arrangement seems to be satisfactory with the membership and everyone as far as I know is happy.

Q Do you have any projects going at the present time?

A Yes, we have a continuing project. You know, the reason we are in existence is the Parson Thorne Mansion, and that, if you could see it, you would realize is an everlasting project. That was given to us in 1961 by Mr. Draper. It was in sad shape--inside--and we've done a lot of work on that, inside, outside, and we have much much more work to do on it yet. And of course, it's with that just as it is with your own home--when you make the rounds of painting, it's time to start again...besides all the restoration that needs to be done.

Q Do you think that (Mr. Hurley was saying this) perhaps there's not a great historical consciousness in Milford?

A I'm afraid he's right. We lack something in Milford that some other small towns have. Ordinarily I think in this area, in small towns especially, there will be families who have lived in the town for generations. Happily, some of them have money. But the families in Milford who had money and who did have that feeling of history and continuity have died out or moved away. So that the people here who have the most money don't seem to have that feeling of history that would be so helpful connected with a fat pocketbook.

Q Now, one of the main things we are trying to find out in these interviews is how Milford is changing--since probably 1900 or so. Would you say that this is a major change--the fact that you just mentioned, the fact that the older families who were the upper class or the leadership of the community, have moved away or died out?

A I would say that was one big change.

Q Could you give any reason why this has happened? An economic reason--that they've lost their money--or is it because the young people just don't like living in a small town anymore?

A I'm trying to think of individual families and what happened to them. I can think first about the Causey family. That was a very prominent family, you know. They furnished a governor. Well, there was the Causey family who lived on this street in Causey mansion (the big yellow house in the center of town) and then later they moved to another house--they built it on their property. There were four girls in the family, and I think two boys. Of the four girls, one married...I'm not sure if there were three or four. But only one of the girls married. She had one daughter who has moved--she now lives in Florida. One of the boys in the family didn't marry. One more did marry and went to Washington to live. And there ends the Causey family in Milford. And that is more or less typical, I would say. So perhaps they found better jobs elsewhere, or families have a way of just dying out.

Q Were the Causey family in one particular business, or how did they make their money?

A The one who came to Milford first was a merchant and I think he had a tannery or a bark mill. He was a businessman. Now that is the sort of thing that Mr. Hurley knows ten times more about than I do. I'm just trying to think of what caused families to change.

Q Did you have any personal contact with this family?

A Well, the daughter of Mrs. Aldrey, the one who did marry, used to substitute teach at school, and sometimes I was lucky enough to be in a class she taught as a substitute. That was the only contact I had. One of the other daughters gave music lessons--piano lessons--but I was not her pupil. They were people that I knew very very casually. Very slightly, just to speak to.

Q Were there any other leading families you can think of?

A The Greer family, of course, is a very prominent family. There are descendents of the Greers here. I don't mean descendents, but there are members of the Greer family here. One of them, Frank Greer, was a state senator...three brothers, and his two brothers have for years run a lumber yard here. They are the exception, I'd say. I think it was their grandfather who came to Milford so that they are not a generation after generation family, as you'll find in some places. If we just had more of the Greer family living, I think we'd fare better, because they were generous.

- Q Can you see a change in the type of families, or the upper class--we're talking now about the social structure of the community, how it's changing as families have died out. Has there been anything that's filled the vacuum of leadership...or who forms the upper class in Milford?
- A Perhaps professional people--doctors. We have two or three lawyers who live here. Of course they don't practice here, they have their residence here. That is just an offhand guess.
- Q Do you think Milford has become more status conscious--the people who live in Milford--over the last 50 years?
- A No, I don't. I would say less conscious. I really don't think we--I believe our thinking is less in terms of class than it used to be. Don't you think that's true, generally? That people are less class conscious?
- Q Well, it's an interesting question. If you look at America as a whole, people say that the small town was good in America, that everyone was friendly with one another, and there was no class; and yet they see this changing, that people are becoming more class conscious...because of affluence, because new families become rich out of new businesses that have just grown up in the last 20 or 30 years. And so people are more status conscious as the community becomes wealthier or as new people come in...there's a jealousy between the old people, this sort of thing. So now there are different opinions, and I guess it just depends on the community.
- A Yes, it does, and your relation to it, too. That's an interesting point of view. Oh, I suppose people who are more or less competitive and are trying to climb the social ladder do this, that or the other for position, but I really think that in Milford there is less social consciousness than there was in years past. Anyone now who really wants to make the social grade should I say, if he has the necessary money, can do it. Presumably--it happens, anyway.
- Q Do you see a lot of new people moving into the community?
- A Oh, my goodness, yes. The telephone directory looks like a directory of a strange town.
- Q And yet the population has stayed relatively the same.
- A That's right. Numerically, it has changed very little.
- Q Can you see any reason why new people would be coming in?

- A Oh, yes, there are reasons. There is always the complaint, "Oh, Milford needs industry." But we do have businesses that have come in. For instance, we gain people through a business that isn't even here. There are a number of General Foods people who live here and they are the executive type that live in Milford rather than in Dover. And then we have some other industries here that have come bringing people. They bring the administrators of the business. Of course the ordinary workers are around here. And then the Dover Air Base has contributed to the growth of Milford. So we gained a little bit.
- Q When you say the growth of Milford, do you mean....
- A The slow growth--or at least to maintaining the population.
- Q Would you say that Milford is a growing and prospering community?
- A Yes, it grows a little bit, not too much, but if you add 25 people a year, at least you are going forward and not backwards.
- Q Well, do you see any major changes in Milford in your experience over the last 50 years that have been brought about for example by the automobile, or any major change that's affected the life here?
- A I'll tell you one change that I think of every weekend. It used to be that Saturday was a big shopping day in Milford. On Saturday afternoon the streets were full of people. Downtown Walnut Street was where the stores are or used to be--you see many vacant ones there now. But cars were parked on both sides of the streets, and on Saturday night you could hardly work your way through for people. Many people parked their cars and kept them there all evening and just sat there watching the crowd go by. That is one big change that I think of every time I walk through Milford on either Saturday afternoon or Saturday night. Now then, it is almost as deserted as it is on Sunday. That is one big change.
- Q What would be the reason for the change--the causes?
- A I think there are two reasons. The shopping area has spread out. We have a shopping center. But even that isn't busy on Saturday night. And we have the Milford shopping plaza on route 113. But most of all--well, maybe there are more than two reasons. People can go to Dover to shop, they can go to Salisbury to shop--it's a different place, somewhere to go; plus the fact that we don't have a six-day work week. People don't have to wait until Saturday night to shop; they can shop all during the week. I do think that is part of the reason. But of course changes are not always explainable.

Q Do you see any changes in the religious nature of the community?

A Apparently church attendance has grown considerably. And certainly as organizations the churches have changed tremendously, you know that. That isn't typical of Milford--that's typical throughout. They engage in so much social service work and all kinds of things.

Q What are the attitudes of most people toward this? Do they like the churches to become involved in this kind of social work? Or do they like the churches as they used to be?

A I think most people like them as they are. So many of the women, I think, find the circles a source of social life.

Q So that would be almost a non-religious reason then. Would you say people are more religious today or less religious than they were for example when you were a child?

A That I would hesitate to say. I just know churches are different, people go for different reasons. When I was growing up, people went to church Sunday night as a more or less of a social event. Now, then, there are very few church services anywhere Sunday night but people go to the church's various meetings as social events. So it's practically the same thing but on different dates.

Q Well, there have been times in American history when there was an upheaval in religious enthusiasm. Some people say that in the 1920's there was an increase in religious enthusiasm, especially in the Midwest and in the South. Would you say that in the 1920's in Delaware there was this kind of religious enthusiasm?

A I don't remember it. I don't think we've had any great upheaval of religion in Milford at any time.

Q Sometimes it's tied to a particular preacher, who comes in and is very popular.... Can you think of any preachers who have been very popular?

A Years ago--it's not exactly a matter of churches, but we had a Holiness minister who came to town and held services in a tent all summer, and many people, those who did not go to established churches and some who did go to established churches just fell under the spell of Mr. Quand and they were shouting and rolling and just having a grand time night after night. The tent was pitched across the railroad track where the red brick building is. You may not be able to see it for the trees, but that's where Mr. Quand pitched his tent.

Q Were you living in this house at the time?

A No. Well, like everything else, when he left, the enthusiasm died out and a Holiness Church was established but it settled down to be a more traditional church than he had started. Now that is the only really religious revival I'll say that I remember. There may have been some, but I just don't remember them.

Q The religious nature of the community has been generally Protestant, as I understand it.

A Yes, when I was a child the Catholic Church was very small--there were very few Catholic families in town. There were some outside of town, but they were chiefly foreign people. However, the Catholic Church now has grown; there are many many more Catholic families in Milford.

Q Was there any hard feeling between the Protestants and the Catholics?

A I regret to say that there were some people who thought that Catholics were just a little above the devil. Now that was years ago, many years ago...but that no longer exists.

Q The Catholic Church has grown then.

A It has grown, and everyone understands that it is another church, people of another belief. And that's it.

Q Can you think of any other social changes that have taken place?

A Oh, yes, there's much less partying. Well, I'd say a different kind of parties. Years ago there were dances that were great social events where the people dressed up, and well, in my school days, after my school days, there were so many many bridge parties. Women played bridge and had a lot of parties but that just seems to have died out now. Maybe it's because doing away with prohibition brought back cocktail parties. That's all you hear about now. There just aren't the other kinds of parties. You may know the name Mrs. G. Marshall Townshend. You know the Townshends? Publishers of the Milford Chronicle Newspaper? Well, Mrs. Townshend for years and years wrote the social column of the paper. And one time she made the comment, not in the paper, but to a friend of mine, it was about 10 years ago. She said, "Women don't have parties anymore; they have projects." And I think that's part of the reason. Women are working on the hospital fair for instance and working on worthwhile projects, money-making and otherwise, so that their time is taken up with that rather than with so many parties.

- Q Why would you say this has happened, that women have become more project oriented? Do they have more free time on their hands?
- A Oh, yes, definitely they do. They don't like to admit it but they certainly do. Some women will make the remark that women work more than they ever did. If they do it's by choice, not by necessity. They don't have to bake the bread, they don't have to wash on the washboard, they live a pushbutton life. But I think part of it is probably tied up with what you were talking about first. Class consciousness. There was a rich class 50 years ago who had the parties and who did things. Other people couldn't and didn't. Maybe that's the reason for it and all women have become more interested and active in things outside the home. That's just generally true, isn't it, or not?
- Q Oh, yes, we're witnessing that in the 20th century, a great change in attitudes or women and the position of women in society. Has women's liberation affected Milford? Do you have a women's movement here?
- A Not to my knowledge.
- Q How do the women react if you watch what's going on on T.V. or just hear what's going on in other places? How do women react to that?
- A They just laugh about it; that's all I hear. Now I don't know. A friend of mine, we were school classmates--she lives in Wilmington--she has been very active in the AAUW. Now that's the American Association of University Women. I made the remark that if the Milford organization had the interesting activities that the Wilmington organization had, I would like to be a member. And she made the comment that she thought that this organization here was more interested in women's lib. So maybe that organization is interested in women's lib. But not being a member I don't come in contact with it.
- Q Do any of the younger women here act differently than their mothers, how are they different? Do you perceive a difference? How do they act...do you have any relatives that you've had close contact with?
- A Oh, yes, I have nieces and a nephew. Well, first, for one thing they dress differently, so do their mothers. When my grandmother was my age, she wore black, dressed like an old woman. Now then women of all ages wear the same kind of clothes. That doesn't help on how young people act differently. But they get out more and do things. And they drive cars and they can go. Going to the beach used to be a great treat. Sunday School picnic. You don't know about Sunday School picnics. That was a great annual event because so many children didn't get to the beach any other time except then. But now women take their children to the beach day after day or to the swimming pool. That's

one way that women act differently. Mostly I think the big difference is engaging in these projects. Helping in church suppers, working for the hospital--see the hospital auxiliary runs a gift shop in the hospital (that is a year-round job)--and the hospital fair is a big annual event. And then of course they work some for the historical society.

Q These projects would seem to indicate a strong community consciousness.

A Yes, I think so.

Q Would this be as strong as it was in the past?

A Probably. The women's club in town, Milford New Century Club, was organized in 1898. I was just looking at our newsletter that had an article about it and that's why I can rattle off that date. One of the first things that club did was to buy two drinking fountains and place them in Milford downtown. There were three parts--a drinking fountain for people, a horse watering trough and a dog trough. Now then if you go through town you don't see those drinking fountains. Nobody knows what happened to them or when. But you do see how the garden club has beautified that little Memorial Plaza opposite the Presbyterian Church. So the women worked for the betterment of town 75 years ago and we're still working.

Q These are young women as well as older?

A The women in the garden club are chiefly young--well, no, not too young, I guess, it all depends on what you call young. Age is more or less relative. I would say the most active ones are about 40. Some maybe running from 35 to 45, older.

Q I know a lot of young women complain that one thing wrong with small towns is that there is nothing to do.

A Oh, there's always something to do if you want to do it.

Q In your childhood or as far as you can remember in the past, what did you do for entertainment?

A Well, now what I did for entertainment might not be typical, but I had two brothers, they were several years older than I. But the three of us used to play games. The neighborhood children played games outdoors in the evening--spring, summer, and fall until it grew chilly. We played such games as hide and seek and red light and red rover...we

just had a grand time. Then in the winter, we played other games-- parchesi, carom, I remember we played...things of that kind. We entertained ourselves in that way, whereas children now are watching television. Now recreation on a town scale was different. We used to have shows that came to town sometimes...what do you call them... plays were put on by traveling stock companies. .

Q Vaudeville, would this be?

A No, they were not vaudeville, they were plays. I think, well one I remember was about Jesse James and another one was perhaps "Ten Nights in the Barroom." Dramatic plays, melodramatic. And in those days we had movies, too. Every year the firemen had a carnival where there were booths to chance off everything from cupie dolls to blankets. And we had Chautauqua...do you know about Chautauqua?

Q Yes...when did this come?

A It always came for a week in September. That was in the 20's. That was the most cultural activity that we had.

Q Was there a great deal of support for this?

A No, no...it was always a struggle to get enough people to guarantee it. They had guarantors...men who agreed to pay from their own pockets the difference if there should be a lack of money to pay the people who performed. There were lectures and concerts, always one play. It was performed in a tent. It was always a very nice thing...very, very nice...a high level of entertainment.

Q Can you remember any memorable people who gave lectures, or ...

A The only one I remember was an English woman named Ada Ward. What her claim to fame was I don't know.

Q You don't know what she talked about?

A No...I heard her, but I've forgotten what she talked about. And I remember a couple sang. I still remember the song they sang. It was "Madame, Will You Walk, Madame Will you Talk With Me?" And another one, well we had a play, it was either "Sunrise" or "Sunset." That's silly; I suppose there is a difference whether the sun comes up or goes down! I think it was "Sunrise." It was about something dealing with World War I and mountaineers, something of that nature. So it was really a sort of missionary thing. Well, the plays were entertaining, generally speaking, nothing outstanding that I know about. Nobody to my knowledge talked about any person, any

famous person, who got his start that way, or who came to Milford in Chautauqua. There may have been, but I don't know of any. William Jennings Bryan did not come here.

Q That's too bad.

A Yes, it is.

Q I understand President Harding did come.

A Yes, he did.

Q Do you remember that?

A Oh, indeed I do. I walked out to North Walnut Street, down where Mr. Hurley lives, to watch for his car and see him drive by.

Q That was in '23, wasn't it?

A That sounds like it.

Q Actually right before he died.

A Yes, I believe it was in June before he died in August.

Q This is a question that has some relevance today, with people's attitudes toward Presidents. Did you realize at that time that Harding was involved in scandals? Or did people just love President Harding simply because he was the President and he was coming to town?

A He was the President and he was coming to town...now, that's all that mattered, really.

Q Were you aware of any of the scandals taking place at that time in his administration?

A I don't know. I can't tell you whether I was aware of it at that time or whether learning about later makes me think I was. It's just one of those memories that I can't unravel. You know, sometimes you remember something that happened when you were a child because people told you about them so many times. It's that sort of memory that I have...it's just too fuzzy.

Q Do you remember anything about Harding personally?

- A Oh, I can still see him driving by in that big touring car...open car.
- Q Was he waving to the crowd?
- A Oh, yes.
- Q He was a very handsome man.
- A Yes, he was. He was a likeable man, people who met him say. That was just one of the greatest events that ever happened for a President of the United States to come to Milford to be initiated in the Tall Cedars. That was the purpose.
- Q Politically, has Milford been generally Republican, Democrat?
- A Yes, Republican, generally.
- Q Through most of the 20th century?
- A I think so.
- Q Would this be because it's a conservative small town, or because farmers in general are Republican?
- A I'd hesitate to say. Maybe years back it was predominantly Democratic, but I'd say within my recollection it's chiefly Republican. Generally Republican.
- Q What kind of political activity takes place here? Is there very little political activity...people just go and vote and that's the end of it, or do you have political rallies and campaigns?
- A No, we don't have political rallies and campaigns ordinarily. When Governor Petersen was running, of course he went throughout the state, you'll remember, holding meetings and trying to meet people. Oh, everybody gets excited before elections, and then it dies down, then we're just good friends again.
- Q What about in the past...has there been a change in politics, for example, in political awareness or political activity? Were people more conscious of politics in the past than they are now?
- A I don't think so.
- Q You hear a lot about apathy of people towards politics....

- A I think people are less ready to rise up and do something and run for office perhaps than in the past. Maybe that is the apathy. People know more about what is going on, but let the other fellow do it. I think in organizations, for instance, practically every organization has trouble getting officers, getting people to take responsibility and the leadership. And perhaps that is the same attitude that runs into politics. The political attitude may be the same thing. It's all right to learn about what is going on or talk about it, but just not to...well, I don't know whether we feel anxious to take part in it or not.
- Q But you see very little change over the last 50 years.
- A I see very little here.
- Q What about economic changes that have taken place in the city? Has the city become less an agrarian town, rural town? Has industry come in that has changed the character of the city?
- A Oh, yes. Fifty years ago, I would say the L. D. Caulk company and the shipyards were perhaps the only businesses here...canneries, too. But now the shipyards are gone, the canneries are gone, and the other businesses are here. Institutions have become big business here...schools have become big business, hospitals. The railroad has gone out. We have nothing here of course but freight trains and not too many of them. But we have trucking business. One rather big trucking business.
- Q Which business would that be?
- A It's now T.I.E. It used to be Maston Transportation. That was the Milford man who started it, and then sold it possibly fifteen years ago or longer.
- Q What about the farms in the surrounding area. Are they growing different crops, or do you see any change?
- Aq I don't know. I'm not familiar with that. There used to be a lot of corn; there's still a lot of corn, but so many farmers now raise soybeans, which I believe is a comparatively new crop, isn't it? Still have tomatoes, and beans. One big difference, I guess, is...well, I don't know whether the Milford area had a lot of peaches or apples or not. I just don't know. There was one big orchard outside of town that had apples, but that is no longer true. I can think of two of them. Men who had big apple orchards--it was a big farming project, but no longer. That has ended. What they are doing, I don't know.

- Q You hear a lot of people complaining today, in regard to the economy, and in business, that big business is taking over America, and everything is becoming more organized, the small businessman is being eliminated, put out of business. Is this happening in Milford?
- A It's certainly happening in grocery stores. It used to be that there were the little independent neighborhood grocery stores, as well as grocery stores on the main street. Now, then, you can count on one hand the number of little neighborhood grocery stores. The supermarkets have taken the place of them. That is one example of big business that has taken over. But other than that, I don't know that we have any big businesses that have put little businesses out. It's just harder for any little business to survive. No more so in Milford than in other places, I guess.
- Q How do you perceive this change -- a lot of people look at the general store of the past in very nostalgic terms...it was good to have a general store. Do you see the change...the general store is no longer here, instead we have a supermarket. Do you perceive this as a good change or a bad change?
- A Well, a lot of changes are good and bad, too. The supermarket of today has done so much for people, brought so many foods to people that we didn't have, or would not have at the little stores. Although I guess that really isn't true. It's the packaging and preserving of food that has done more for that. The supermarket just gives it to us on a larger scale. But to tell you the truth, something I miss more than anything else is the old-fashioned ice cream parlor that we had years ago. If you want to go somewhere in the evening and get a dish of ice cream, there is nowhere to go except the Dairy Queen or a Tasty Freeze, places of that kind. It used to be that we had two drug stores that had soda fountains, where they had good ice cream, good ice cream sodas, coca-cola, things of that kind... that's over. And of course, many years ago, when I was just a little girl, there was a store that was simply an ice cream parlor, that had nothing but ice cream and candy. And not too many years ago, one of those...well, we used to call it "The Greeks" because it was run by a Greek family; they had what was called a Candy Kitchen. They made candy; they sold ice cream; when things began to change, well they started serving sandwiches, and maybe some meals. Now, they're gone. The family died out. The man, the last of the family, retired, and that ended the business.
- Q Was it because their ice cream and candy tasted better, the reason you miss it?
- A It was somewhere to go to get it. There is nowhere now.

Q It's not the same going to a Dairy Queen?

A No, it's not the same. You don't sit down at a table, and eat the ice cream and talk with all the other people there. There was sociability as well as good ice cream. The good ice cream, well that doesn't matter. It was something that people would do after the movies.

I don't know about economic changes in Milford any more than other places. In other places in the country there is less difference between what the rich people have and what the poor people have.

Q What about your own family business? Has this changed over the years?

A Oh, my goodness, yes. It has changed completely. My father came here in 1912. He started in 1917 his own special millwork business and that was the family business.

Q What did you make, anything that was ordered?

A Yes, special millwork for business means windows, doors, trim, stairways, anything that you could not buy ready-made, that had to be special made, he did. Now then, that is completely out. The millwork as a line was completely discontinued in 1965; in 1937 selling and installation of oil burners was taken on; and now the business is almost completely heating, air conditioning, fuel oil. I say almost because...well, I'm sorry it wasn't 1937 that oil burners were added...they were added around 1930. It was in 1937 that blown rock-wool insulation was added and that is still one line of work. So you can see how that one business has changed.

Q Would you say that's a change you regret, do you feel sorry that your old business is no longer around? I mean, was it better to do millwork back then?

A I don't know. I think wood does smell much better than oil. And it's much cleaner. But I don't believe in just sitting around regretting inevitable changes.

Q Well, I think we're talking here about attitudes, and this is what I'd like to ask people, especially their attitudes toward this change.

A It's a change that I regret, but I don't bemoan it, because that is a part of the assembly line living of today. The reason the millwork business was discontinued, special millwork, I have to distinguish between the two, was not lack of work, it was lack of workmen. Young men can get assembly line jobs now out of high school that

pay them so well that there is no inducement to them to learn a skill. In all lines of work that require craftsmanship, we are losing out to the assembly line.

Q This also involves union problems, too. Sometimes it's difficult for people to get into a union if they don't enter a particular job.

A Well, this could be. I don't know. That problem didn't enter into it.

Q That didn't affect your business? Because in the late 30's and 40's there was a strong unionization drive.

A Not down here. I guess maybe about 20 years ago, 15, something like that...well, the unions have come into other businesses; trucking businesses you know, of course, and in the poultry packing business, and I don't know what else. But chiefly those, I think.

Q Did the depression affect you very much--your business?

A Yes, it did; that's why the line of oil burners was added, because the millwork business was affected. People didn't build as many homes, they didn't build as expensive homes. When a person built an ordinary home, he didn't need special millwork. The special millwork came in for luxurious homes. For instance, one home that we furnished special millwork for was R. M. Carpenter Jr.'s home. Now that's the type of residence that would have special millwork. They would have an architect and he would design something just for them, not the ordinary run-of-the-mill doors or windows or trim. So of course the depression would affect it.

Q Did it affect Milford in general to a great degree or to a lesser degree--as far as employment, people out of work?

A I think in a small town people are never affected as greatly by hard times as city people. The depression was felt, yes, especially by people coming out of college--they just couldn't get jobs. I can think of one man who is president of a bank here. When he graduated from college, there was just nothing for him to do; he just didn't have anything to do for a year or so. Now they are the cases that I remember. Undoubtedly there were hardship cases, but I don't really know of any.

Q Do you remember seeing anything in the town that was unusual, like people selling apples in the streets, or did you see a lot of hobos?

A Not here, no. When I was a child we had tramps we called them, hobos, who would just come to the back door and ask for something to eat. They followed the railroad tracks. And then there were umbrella men,

too. Now, this was long before the depression. Have you ever seen an umbrella man? They were men who travelled around mending umbrellas. They walked, maybe they hopped a ride on a freight train, too; they must have. But they had their equipment with them, they'd come to the back door, rap, and ask if you had any umbrellas to mend. If you did, they mended them, and that was it. You know years ago, 100 years maybe, 200 years, there were tinkers who went around the country mending pots and pans. Well, these umbrella men were the same class of people. But the tramps were just hobos.

Q Tramps today complain that things were a lot better back then, because people were more friendly. Would you say this is a change, that today people are less friendly towards strangers, not just tramps, but towards strangers in general.

A People are more suspicious, now, I think. They're afraid now. Years back they were not afraid to talk to strangers. But you hear so much news now that we didn't hear years ago; we're afraid.

Q Do you remember the radio of the 20's and 30's? Did you have a radio?

A My two brothers made a crystal set. All they could get was the Morse code, and we had headphones, earphones, and we were just thrilled to pieces to hear that Morse code coming over the radio. And then when they improved upon it and we could get music, that was just the ultimate. Station KBKA was the one, and the one in Schenectady, New York, I've forgotten the call letters of that, and then there was one in Atlantic City. In the early days of radio, they were our mainstay. We did enjoy it.

Q People say that it's bad for children to spend so much time in front of the T.V. today, but yet, you can look back, and didn't you spend a lot of time in front of the radio?

A No, 'cause that...it wasn't that great, really. Radios didn't mean too much to us. They were just a novelty. We didn't sit by the hour. We treated it as just a novelty, something to turn on and listen a while, and turn off. We knew it was there and we enjoyed having it, more like a phonograph. We would spend about the same amount of time listening to the radio that you would spend listening to a phonograph record. We read, and as I said, we played games.

Q Do you remember on the radio the speeches of Franklin Roosevelt?

A His fireside chats?

- Q Yes, did these have a great impact on you? Did you think they were really "something"?
- A I suppose this was the first time that a President of the United States actually came to the people, his voice, wasn't it?
- Q Well, on a regular basis, it was. This was supposedly why it had a great impact. But a lot of people just didn't like Franklin Roosevelt so they didn't care.
- A Well, I'm afraid I'm in that category.
- Q Do you remember the impact any other presidents had on you, like Truman, or...
- A No, Presidents are something we have, always have had and hope we always will have, and the only time we get excited about them I think is when they're running for election. Just the same as anybody else would feel about them.
- Q Would you say Milford as a town was affected by World War II, was changed by the war in any way?
- A I don't know. Perhaps the town was unified a bit more through that war. People worked together, there was a common enemy. I would say that was an effect, not a great effect, but somewhat.
- Q Did it have an effect, for example, in the people who left to fight in Europe and in the Pacific; when they came back, were they changed, did the people see that they were changed in any way?
- A I don't think so. I don't know of any cases of that. No, I don't think so.
- Q What about in the early fifties when there was a great deal of turmoil in the country, about the cold war and about communism and so on. Did that affect a small community like this?
- A Well, we did our share of talking and complaining about it. I think that's all.
- Q In various communities, for example, school teachers were put under suspicion because they taught what people considered communist doctrine, and so on.
- A I don't think there was what you would call witch hunting here. I don't remember any. The fifties is a period in time recent enough to

remember that. Frankly what made more impact in Milford in the fifties was the integration question because you know what happened here in 1954. Now that was what really tore the town apart.

Q Why did that happen here instead of other places first?

A I believe that Milford was probably the first town, in lower Delaware, anyway, to admit colored children to white schools. And that just didn't go at all with people, especially the farmers. Farmers are independent. And they almost literally rose up in arms against it. Schools had to be closed for about a week, and that was really a dreadful time.

Q Was there any violence? Did anyone get hurt?

A No, nobody got hurt. I think it's a miracle that they didn't. Because feeling ran very high. That is the only, really the only, time I recall in my lifetime in Milford when there was a great turmoil in the town and people were divided in feeling.

Q Was most of the town against the school board's decision to integrate or was it pretty evenly divided? You say most of the farmers were against it...does that mean most of the townspeople were for it?

A No, not necessarily, but the farmers were the ones who took the lead. I don't know, there were people who were quite vocal, people who came right out and disapproved, and there were people who came right out and approved, and most people kept quiet. They just didn't let their thinking be known. Because people were so quick to criticize at that time, somehow the idea got abroad that the good-thinking people favored having colored children in the schools, so if you didn't agree with that you were not labeled one of the good-thinking people, but one of the bad people. For that reason I would say a lot of people just didn't let their opinions be known. I would suspect it was about 50-50.

Q What was the result of the trouble? Was the town divided for a long period of time or was the whole thing quietly resolved?

A It took a long long time for hard feelings to end. In fact, I think in some cases they never did. There were friends who were at such opposite ends and felt so strongly about the matter in different ways that they ceased to be friends. Even today the friendship's been broken. And that is what actually happened; and I think there was one man whose wife was on the school board at that time (the whole school board resigned)...he retired not too long after that and they moved to Rehoboth. And I may be completely wrong but I always had the feeling that it was that integration/segregation fracas that caused them to leave town.

Q How many blacks live in the town?

A Well, I should really find that out, because I have been asked that question other times when I've been traveling. I don't know whether to guess whether there are 500 colored people or 1500. Possibly we do have about 20% black.

Q Do they live in one particular area?

A Most of them do. In North Milford. That's the oldest part of the town and that's the part they have taken over.

Q Do they work in some particular industry?

A I don't know. They just work in different places, a few of them here, a few there, anywhere at all.

Q That was in the very beginning of the civil rights movement. Has the civil rights movement affected Milford since then? Has there been an attempt on the part of the blacks themselves to organize to do things and so on?

A Not the local colored people so much as the NAACP. Every so often it makes itself known...comes to town. There are a few colored people who are active in that organization and in promoting civil rights. Of course it is felt here as in other places...it is in the buying, selling and renting of property that it is felt most, for the simple reason, that is really economic. People will theorize that it's perfectly all right for a colored family to move into a white neighborhood, but when it happens, property values drop immediately. But other than that one fact we do all right. Of course the farther south you go in Delaware, the more "southern" it becomes.

Q Well, Milford is pretty far south. It has a reputation of being a southern community. What is the attitude of people here in Milford toward northern Delaware? Do you see a division toward Wilmington?

A Oh, yes, yes indeed.

Q Is it sort of a funny thing, or is it really a hard-felt thing?

A Whenever any political issues are at stake, then it becomes rather bitter, because now, you know, since the reorganization, the upper part of the state controls the whole state. When we had equal representation regardless of population, lower Delaware could control it. Kent and Sussex Counties could go in together and have things their own way. But other than when political issues are at stake, we just

laugh it off, I guess. We say there is Wilmington and then there is Delaware.

Q Do you have the same attitudes toward the duPonts, duPont company?

A To tell the truth, I think people living down here have seen the contribution of the duPont family more perhaps than people living in the upper part of the state. We know that it was T. Coleman duPont who gave the highway; and we know that it was one of the duPonts, I forget which one, who gave the colored school buildings. Now that the people in the upper part of the state don't have reason to feel as much as we do. Oh, there's always jealousy of the person who has a lot of money. That's human nature. That always has been and I guess always will be.

Q Is there a lot of animosity towards Wilmington because it's a big city?

A Oh, no, I don't think so.

Q In other words, is there a love/hate relationship between the city and the country.

A I don't think so.

Q Do you distrust people from Wilmington because they're from a big city?

A We don't feel that Wilmington is that big a city. They're not classed as city slickers. You have to be from Philadelphia to be a city slicker. No, really, I think we just regard Wilmington as an over-grown town; but we do more or less resent the fact that Wilmingtonians sort of look down their noses at lower Delaware. But it's more of a laughing matter than anything else...until politics get into it.

Q Well, can you recall anything else, any other changes?

A I should. It's very difficult to think off hand.

Q Any reminiscences or anything that happened to you personally or to your parents that shows a change from the past to the present?

A Well, one recollection I have is of no value, no interest. When I was in the fourth grade, the first airplane flew over Milford and crashed. It was such a great event that we were permitted to go outside the school to watch it fly over and when it crashed, most of us just took off across the fields to look for it. And we found it. We younger children were not punished; the teachers said we just followed the

older children who should know better. I don't know what happened to them, how they were punished. But that was something that we talked about in school for years. As long as there was anybody left who remembered it. Today, that's nothing. But an airplane flying over was just a great, great event.

Q You've had some floods and so on, haven't you, in Milford?

A Floods, but not disastrous floods. We've been very fortunate here. We haven't had any great disasters of nature, no great catastrophes. We've had fires, but every town has those. We've been very lucky, I think.