

INFORMATION SHEET

Gifford Towle

Born: September 25, 1907

Place of Birth: Worcester, MA

Mother's Name: Carolyn Gifford Towle

Father's Name: Frank Berton Towle

Spouse's Name: Marjorie Towle

Date of Interview: March 24, 1980

BJ = Barbara Jenkins, Interviewer

GT = Gifford Towle

Original transcription by Jean Miller

BJ: You were starting to tell me how it was that you got out here.

GT: When I was studying agriculture and allied subjects, that is a split major at what was then Mass. Aggie—it became Mass State before I got through—something got me started up in these hill churches. I don't remember what it was. I do remember that John C., Whiteman, a Conference person in this area of Massachusetts, wanted to get pastoral care of three points—that is, Dwight Station which is also north of Belchertown and Packardville which is a Congregational Church and Pelham Hill which was also a Congregational Church. He wanted the care of these churches. Somehow we got together, and he got me in on a grant from the Massachusetts Conference, which paid part of the expenses. The church paid part of the expenses and this became a part-time enterprise. Which was very valuable for me in experience and maybe might have done some local person some good. Who knows!

BJ: What background did you have for giving the sermons and things?

GT: Well, mostly church life and study in a place like Mt. Hermon—and conferences. I was born and brought up a Quaker, or a Friend, as they were known. And, in the Friends' system, even then I was a recorded minister. In '30, no '28—I was recorded by them in '32, and this started in '30 when I was in that direction and having that kind of experiences in the Home Meeting in Worcester. So it kind of came natural to me. I had been interested in this kind of thing as I said before, about Sam Higgenbottom, he was a Mt. Hermonite, who went to India and founded an agricultural college and wrote this up in the *Gospel and the Plow*, an inspiration to me, 'cause he pointed out how much this could do to change the situation in poverty stricken areas. So I started to get prepared for that kind of service. And also when this opportunity came in the surrounding churches, I was very happy to see what I could do. So for two years in what is now UMass and for four years in Seminary in Hartford, I carried on these three points as a yoked parish. We would Saturday to—that is, the last four years when Marjorie joined me—we go Saturday nights to meet with the youth of North Belchertown (Dwight Station), and then Sunday morning we would have an early morning service in which Evelyn Kimball was a very real support and help. She worked with us on that. We would go early in the morning for service there, and then we would go over to Packardville for service there. And then in the evening, there would be a service at the Church on the Hill, which is now the museum. These three worked together as yoked parishes. In summers, during seminary, we came and lived in the area—either Pelham Hill or Packardville, and did it as a full-time job through summer. That was a lot of fun. And thereby hand some tales!

Don't you have “automatic” on that when you're recording?

BJ: I can use a microphone.

GT: No, I meant the level of recording is automatic.

- BJ:** I guess not. You started to say, about some tales...
- GT:** First, let's get a little background first. In those days, Packardville was quite a community. This was long before Quabbin. There were a lot of people living over there, like Will Chaffee and Collis-Kimball family. Let's see, Webbs, Pratt—Theron and Celia Pratt who moved into that family now. Well, you've got several relatives over there still. The Devon Lane tractor people on 202 are related.
- BT:** I've got to write some of these names down because I know when I type them, it's always hard to understand. What was that name, Theron?
- GT:** T H E R O N, I think. Theron Pratt and Celia.
- BT:** So these people have gone more towards the Belchertown area.
- GT:** Yes. Also that lumber company, Conkey people on 202 are very definitely related to the Pratts. Oh, I wish I could name more. And Paul C. Mitchell who now has a place down here on Harkness. They made more ministers than ministers made the congregation (laughs). They were a very amazing group, really amazing group.
- BJ:** What do you mean "more," specifically when you said that?
- GT:** I mean solid New Englanders who knew their place in the world and have a faith and a practice. That means they can manage things. You aren't necessarily making them, you are inspiring or encouraging them, maybe, but they've got it made, in one sense. These old New Englanders knew what the world was all about and how you got on. They had a sense of humor that I always loved. Will Chaffee had a marvelous sense of humor. He'd tell stories and you wouldn't guess that there was going to be a joke until you watched his eyes. He'd keep a straight face, but his eyes would betray what he was up to. And Will would tell fascinating yarns, some of which we remember and some we don't. But there are always lots of things that go with that type of parish life. For example, in the fall, I've never seen anything like it since that Packardville Church. The wasps—the paper wasps—would enter the church just as soon as it got chilly. And you'd come Sunday morning, all the windows would be full of those wasps. Les Kimball was an expert. He could pick those off by their wings, throw them on the floor, and step on them, and not get stung. I've never known him to get stung once. But he was an expert at this art of picking them off by their wings and disposing of them. And it was a good idea, because when you warmed the church up, you had the stove, 2 stoves on either side, at least one side, and I think there may have been one on the other, and these long flues that went all the way along through—as Bishop O'Connell once said, "Those flues in the old country churches wandered around inside, trying to find a place to get out." (Laughs) And that's what happened in Packardville. Ah, that's O'Connell.
- BJ:** O'Connell. Okay. You knew.

GT: Boston University, right.

BJ: See, I thought you'd said McConnell, so I would have been in trouble.

GT: Yes, that's O'Connell, Boston University. So you had to make your fire, heat your church up. Many people came in from the outside. You had to gather folks together. It was like what the Quakers speak of as "Gathering the Meeting." In the winter there were problems, of course, with the snow. But the spring was in some ways, as I'd said earlier, a rougher time. Because you might go in, say Easter, on frozen ground, but by the time you left church and the sun was up and got that frost out, you were in mud holes and quagmires, and you often had to rebuild roads with rocks and stone walls on the side, in order to get out and move. We were married in that Packardville church, and that was a fascinating business, because some of my buddies from the College wanted very much to do this thing up properly. And that meant obstructing the couple's get-away.

BJ: (Laughs) Yes??

GT: Sid Parkinson and others were out to get me, and some of the boys and men that I knew down there. So, these church people were very, very helpful in this regard. You wouldn't know this geography, but the roadway that went up to the church also continued as a wood road beyond the church, unknown to these friends of mine. "Friends," in quotation! We hid a car down that wood road. So they thought they had everything sewed up. They tied tin cans and everything else on my particular car. They thought they had everything fixed. But when it came to after the wedding, which was a Quaker wedding in a Congregational church, and the reception which was downstairs in the parish hall, we jumped out of one of those windows out of the parish hall after we changed, and rand down this country road and grabbed the car which was hidden and drove further down until we came to a brook. And then we abandoned that car, crossed the brook, and we had our car that we were going to use, hidden on the Enfield Road on the other side of the brook. Well, these fellows, of course, caught on that there was something, so they rushed off to get down. But we had a friend farmer with a truck. He was on the bridge just below the church. He had "unfortunately" lost his key and he asked these fellows who came rushing, to help him find his key. He couldn't find it. He held them up long enough so that Les Kimball, who was our driver, and a very excellent fast driver, he was. Only one person got wise and followed up, and that was a brother-in-law who smelled a rat. He got down there before the truck.. He chased us, but Les was too much for him on the back roads.

BJ: It's too bad you didn't rob a bank or something while you were doing it!

GT: Yes, yes. We got back to Amherst finally, and just walked around as though nothing had happened. I mean. Nobody knew where we were. Then we went up on the Mohawk Trail for our honeymoon, which was a wonderful place. But that was typical of this congregation. They pulled that off in good style. They

- managed the wedding and they managed the reception and they helped manage the get-away. Which was real cooperation and a lot of fun.
- BJ:** How many people would you say were involved in that parish?
- GT:** Well, attendance would be 30-40 usually. Now, how many members, Evelyn Kimball might know.
- BJ:** I wanted a sense of how many were active. That's really more like...
- GT:** Oh a group of 30 to 40 to 45. They were very active. You could count on them, without question. They would be there. Now this church up on the hill, they were not such a large group, and they weren't such a—may I say—warm congregation, supportive congregation. They were a very different kind of group. A much smaller group—say 20, 25. Not a large group, as I remember it. But Dwight Station was a number of young people. Quite a lot of young people. George Brooks, who helped me do this work right here. Right after he got back. He was up in Vermont, and a very good carpenter like his father. You can see the stone work, I mean the brick work. He's done that too. He has very clever use of his hands in many ways. He's now down in the Gulf Coast in Alabama. George and Winn Fay and a number of these local people, young people, were very interesting group. There were a lot of faithful people there, very regular people. Pratt. Oh, I wish I could name all those people. It was a small congregation of 20, 25. But you could count on them.
- BJ:** Why do you suppose there was such a difference between the Pelham Hill Church? Was it the individual type families or...
- GT:** That's right, I think that's it!
- BJ:** Was there more dissension or something? History?
- GT:** Private interest I would call it.
- BJ:** Oh, okay, that's interesting.
- GT:** Yes, it is. I mean, I don't think they loved their Lord as much as they loved their own wish. They wanted things like—they wanted it!
- BJ:** And, from what you can gather, had that been historically the case too?
- GT:** (Laughs.) I would think so, pretty much. Some of these people have moved away since. There are very few of these people, or their families, who are left, that I remember. I remember one family, particularly, who were on that road going up to Shutesbury. Kind of cantankerous, if you can use that. (Laughs) I remember one summer up on the hill, because we lived in a little cabin just on the east side of 202. What is now 202, and that cabin was really something. We remember lightning storms up there when the lightning actually, visibly jumped; that is, the

electricity from the lightning jumped between our sink and the stove. And it was an exceedingly brilliant business.

BJ: Dangerous, too.

GT: Well, it's amazing. It never struck the cabin. It just seemed to pick—that hill was very prone to lightning. I don't know as you know, but that church was struck twice, you know. I think now you'd find a different situation, because you've got those towers with the microwave, which would take a lot of electricity off. And I don't think you'd have that trouble today, because those microwave disks or towers would tend to short the electrical supply in the area. But it was quite an experience in those days.

BJ: I just was thinking. I remember when I interviewed Evelyn Kimball, and she talked about her—of I don't know—grandfather, father, or great-grandfather, or which it was—and talked about these great theological discussions they would get in about preordination, or something, you know. I didn't understand that word. I thought she meant pre-ordained and she said no it was something else.

GT: No, preordination means that God has decided things, and you fit in.

BJ: Right. Well, I thought that's what she meant, but....

GT: We thought we had a choice.

BJ: So it sounded like if there were people up there battling about things, it was about theology perhaps.

GT: Presbyterians are very strong about preordination, as you may know. In these old days some of those questions were very real. People had, I think, a little more time to think and discuss such things. No TV takes up all their time. There were some great discussions. There were also some very good social things. I hope Evelyn told you about the picnics and the celebrations that used to be.

BJ: No, I guess she didn't. You know, it's hard in an hour or so to talk about all the various things, and you get off on certain topics. She talked about a lot of interesting things within her family, more, I guess.

GT: Fourth of July, the Collis-Kimballs used to have a picnic. And it used to be held over there in Packardville in the old days, and then down here on Harkness Road in more recent days. That was when we were in college. And those picnics invited in all these people—Dwight, Packardville, some from the Hill. It was kind of a reunion like, of churches. And it was a lot of fun. It was a day of baseball, wonderful food, and good fellowship. This helped to bind the communities together. There was a very real interest in Dwight Station on the part of these other churches, particularly Packardville. Collis-Kimballs helped with that church, and well I remember, for example, one of the girls in that church was Vera Burke. Well, Vera Burke moved out later and married a young man in

Shrewsbury, and she's still there. Vera is a very fine citizen down there in that town. She and her children have gone places and done things and we're still in touch. That's one of the families that we're still in touch with. Evelyn is too. She comes up to see Evelyn and ourselves once in awhile. This is some of the hangovers from those old days. She was a kid in Sunday School then. As I said, George Brooks here helped us in the revamping of this house, building a chimney, things like that. He was one of those Sunday School boys.

BJ: You said it was 2 years in college and...

GT: 4 years in Seminary. Then after Seminary, we took a full-time pastorate in Southampton.

BJ: I see. So it was 3 churches in 6 years.

GT: 3 churches in those 6 years, right. A link to our yoked parish. And then we went to Southampton 3 ½ years prior to India. Now, J. Paul Williams was head of the Department of Religion at Mass. State. Then he moved down to South Hadley to become head of the Department of Religion at Mt. Holyoke. He was preaching at that time at what was then the little Methodist Church in West Pelham and is now the United Church of Pelham. Because the old church on the Hill combined with this one and became a yoked or united church. J. Paul—I worked with him as...I was at that time the President of the Y.M.C.A. in the college, and he was my mentor and guide in all these things. We had many theological debates all through the years, even after I got to India. Unfortunately, he is no longer living or we would really continue them, because I have always differed with the man, theologically though I had a great admiration for him. He was instrumental in helping this parish here for some time. And moved his family out here because he wanted Alice Coliss as his children's school teacher. She was an excellent school teacher, and he wanted his children under her. So he moved to West Pelham in order to make that possible.

BJ: You mentioned the social things from the church. I think that was true a lot more in the past, I guess, for getting things together.

GT: Oh much more in the past than today.

BJ: Would the church be dealing with any social problems at that time, or was it pretty much the regular services and...?

GT: They weren't going into welfare problems as a church. The members of the church might. But as a church, I don't think they were dealing too much with welfare problems of the community.

BJ: Were there problems?

GT: Oh yes, I think so. You didn't see them the same way you do now. I don't think they were talked about. At least, you didn't get social workers attacking them

You had in those days “State children,” you know, who were farmed out to families up here. There were a number. One has just recently died who we knew very well. He lived up there on the Hill for years and years, all alone. Even though he was a grown man. I’m trying to think of his name.

BJ: John Kerensky?

GT: John Kerensky is the man. He was just opposite the Pelham Hill Church as a boy in the Sunday School there. He and some of his cohorts were State children earlier. And then he stayed on afterwards in this town. We laid him to rest recently, down in South Valley.

BJ: If anyone was in good condition, he would have been—bicycling up that hill all the time.

GT: Yes, but he had a lot of arthritis.

BJ: I guess.

GT: And internally he had trouble. He was in and out of the hospital. He helped me as soon as we got home. He helped me work on this place. He was a very generous person. But many people were afraid of him because he would threaten people who came near him. He was very protective of his little abode.

BJ: I never knew where it was. I knew it was there some place.

GT: It was on that little road that goes beyond the towers. I went down there. I used to sing out who I was, so he wouldn’t come out with a shotgun. I was down to his cabin a number of times because we shared some vegetables and things like that. John was very generous—he didn’t want to take money for work. He wanted to help you. I had a hard time paying him, but we managed one way or another. He helped me here on a number of jobs after I got back.

BJ: Were you in India when you found out that Quabbin was going to be flooded?

GT: Yes. We left in ’39. That happened in the ‘40s.

BJ: It did? I always seem to get my time wrong.

GT: I hadn’t heard much about it at that time

Tape unclear for a bit.

GT: Then, when Will Chaffee moved down here.... When we were home from India in 1953, Will told us he was going to have to sell. He wanted to sell to the

church, but the church didn't want to buy it. So we made an agreement that he could stay here as long as he wanted. His wife had died and he had no children. If he did die before the agreed payment period of 13 years was up, the place would be ours, lock, stock and barrel. It was good for both of us because it gave him added income during his lifetime and gave us a place for our retirement.

He must have had some kind of premonition. I think it was 1970 when he died. Then a younger brother offered to take care of the place until we got home. He rented it to graduate students until we got back.

But this was typical to me. Will was a friendly kind of person to work with. He improved this place even while we were paying him. Instead of using the money, he put on roofing, he put in a new drive, and he did all kinds of things. He had his days, possible this way, and we now have ours, possible that way. Kind of nice that this relationship worked out that way. He was very active in the church. He was a Deacon of the church.

BJ: The West Pelham?

GT: Yes, the West Pelham United Church. Only, it's really not the West Pelham today. It's the United Church of Pelham. The center of town has really shifted.

BJ: Yes, it has. Do you remember what your feelings were when you heard that that area was going to disappear?

GT: Well, I hated to see the direct connection from Amherst east go. We used to drive down the hill from Pelham to Prescott, then Hardwick, then Holden, because that was my home town. So here was a direct road. Now you've got to go either by Belchertown on Route 9 or you've got to go to Orange that is near to it and Route 202 and 2. Well, 122 to Holden. But you've got to pass one end of Quabbin. The others are under the lake. So when I heard about that, I was sorry that Pelham was going to get chopped up and the roads were going to get broken into. Yes, we certainly were sorry. Except that a big lake in this area is a stabilizing factor in the environment. I mean, you've got a lot of woods now that nobody's going to cut down because it's watershed. And that means animals, birds, fish, all kinds of things. So, in a way, in the long run for the town, I don't think we're going to suffer except the loss of territory, loss of area and residents. But otherwise, we gain by this ecological balance, in a way.

BJ: Did it seem like when that happened that the connections between Amherst and Pelham were stronger because it was so much easier to go this way?

GT: Yes, Packardville people sometimes went to Enfield.

Changes Subject – Tape is unclear

GT: In the summer we lived in a cabin up in the woods opposite the Collis-Kimball place. It was up on log supports. One night Paul C. Mitchell, who lived in Packardville at that time, brought a storage battery and auto horn and connected them underneath the cabin the middle of the night. All of a sudden we heard this loud horn blowing. When I came to and could localize this thing as to where it was... It was underneath us. It took me awhile to kind of orient me. So I thought, one good turn deserved another. I got up and dressed and made a sling—a rope sling for this heavy battery, and I climbed further up the hill, and I found a tall pine tree. And I climbed that pine tree with the battery and the horn. Then I tied the battery in the crotch way up in that pine tree and reconnected the horn. Well,, here this thing was aimed towards where Paul had gone back to bed.

BJ: How did you know it was him?

GT: Oh, you just had to know. Nobody else around would do it (laughs) and it took him an hour to get that thing and get it unconnected. This was typical of Paul. He was a very terrific practical joker. Always pulling stunts. He sent me a birthday card once. I think it was the most clever card I've ever had. It was a piece of sandpaper folded twice so that it was a square, and then ;put in an envelope. But he'd taken a felt-tipped pen and he'd written across the sandpaper, "Scratch another one." (laughs) This is just like him. He's very original. Oh, he'd slip a spoon in your pocket when you were a guest for dinner. Then as you'd go out, he'd say, "Oh, by the way, you want to let me have that silver you took?" And we'd, of course, look with blank faces and he'd reach in the pocket and pull out the spoon he'd put there (laughs).

BJ: I guess some people are that way.

GT: Some people are that way! He always was coming up with something. Margery may remember other stories that I don't. But I certainly enjoyed his practical joking. Most of it was good, clean fun.

BJ: It wasn't sadistic or mean.

GT: No.

BJ: Except in case you don't like horns under your house at night.

GT: Well, you know, we had porcupines come and chew the bark underneath, so noises under that cabin were impossible any time.

BJ: You started to talk about maybe there were some social problems in the community, but the church—that was not a direct kind of application of anything. Were there issues that you were aware of that needed to be addressed by somebody or something? I guess I was asking this because I've asked several people. There seemed to be some people in the community who were kind of like outcasts or something. Were you aware of people like that, or was that just not something that was brought to your attention.

GT: I think that's a fair thing. There a people—of course, in a town like Pelham, inter-marrying as it used to be, and I guess somewhat does still, you had a kind of close-knit relationship with your relatives, your friends, your families. And the “outsider” in quotes, would not automatically fit into this category. So that even in church, you'd occasionally find people—I've found it true even today. Young people say, “They don't really want us.” Meaning that they don't feel a part of that particular fellowship. That is a danger which is not easy to overcome. This church, even today, is not large enough to draw young people. There aren't enough people, for one thing, and there aren't enough resources to have capable leadership that might draw them regularly. And so it's a borderline between the tried and true and those who are on the fringes or edges of this community. So it has been a problem for particularly young people, but other people who don't feel as much of the community.

BJ: Was it an almost completely Protestant community at the time you were out here?

GT: Oh yes, oh, very much so. I can't remember a Catholic family in the community. I'm sure they were there. But it's almost entirely Protestant—but that didn't mean they were church-going Protestants.

BJ: I can remember as I interview different people, they would refer to, say, one man who was Polish. I don't know if that was before your time, who lived up somewhere, and people seemed to be sometimes living in these little pockets around, who really didn't have much to do with the rest of the community. You could be isolated.

GT: You could be. As I have found in Vermont, there is also not only social isolation, but there is also—I'd call it almost spiritual isolation. I mean, I know especially along the river up in Vermont, communities where I have preached ever since we've been back—the ministers tell me in those communities, and I think it's somewhat true, but not as much here because the University being nearby, there's a lot more going on next to us—but isolation in some communities is such that people get ingrown. Then if something happens and they get a guilt complex, this begins to bear down. And pretty soon there's a suicide in the family because they don't know what to do with it. And they haven't revealed their sorrows to the minister, maybe. And maybe the minister hasn't discovered what is eating out their hearts. And so sometimes this loneliness, this separateness of spirit, is as important as the isolation socially.

BJ: Did you feel that in Pelham? Were you ever aware of needs like that?

GT: There were needs here like that. But our time here was such that we were absorbed with the routine services chiefly. I mean the preaching, teaching, and stated socials like church suppers and young peoples' groups and things like that. And so that on the week-end service, that's all you could do. Oh, you might have a funeral, you might have a wedding, you might have an occasion of some kind or another. But you didn't sit down and do regular counseling for lack of time.

BJ: Did you make home visits at all?

GT: Oh yes, by all means. And also we did stay-arounds. I mean, weekends you—oh, I can remember—I won't mention any names because I can't remember them, for one thing—but I remember one family on Enfield Road where we stayed. Good family, but just different in habits. I mean, we had baked potatoes for breakfast. You didn't get this in every house for breakfast! I mean, this was different, so you remember it. The Collis-Kimball family were just absolutely wonderful in the way they took in preachers. Not only ourselves, but others too. They were always making their homes available to us on weekends. We also stayed in a number of other homes throughout the community on weekends. And liked to. Because that's the way you got to know people. You share and get to know people really that way, more than on a formal visit. So, as far as possible, we used to sleep around.

BJ: (laughs) I see.

GT: With the old soap stones.

BJ: Oh, really?

GT: How else to get a cold bed warm?

BJ: I don't know.

GT: (laughs) Oh man, if it hadn't been for soap stones, you really would have had a hard time.

BJ: That would be like in the early '30s you're talking about.

GT: Yep, in the early '30s. Right.

BJ: You came out her, you said, in....

GT: I started Mass. Aggie in '28, graduated in '32 from Mass. State. Then in '36 from Hartford. So this was '30 to '36 in terms of years.

BJ: And you're talking about using cars then, right?

GT: Yes, I had a little puddle jumper. It was a 77 model. I remember it very well because it looked like a converted bathtub. It was one of the first—it was a Willis77. One of these first streamlined deals to come on the market. Drove it 30,000 miles and sold it for \$400 (laughs). Well, that was the way the price went up. The price went up enough in the period when we had it in seminary so that I was able to get what I paid for it. There was only one other time in cars that I was ever able to do that.

- BJ:** You said that the road would be so muddy sometimes. How would you go to get to Packardville?
- GT:** You'd have to go to Enfield Road that begins her by the church and then go over to Knights Corner, then Enfield Road continued down towards Enfield until you came to Packardville church at what is now the power line. You went off the road a little on the rise, and there was this lovely church.
- BJ:** That's off the road that goes to the fishing docks now.
- GT:** Right. There were little farm houses all down there. You must remember there were no paved roads in that area. It was all dirt roads. And there were spots, areas, that were very springy, very muddy in the spring. They would freeze over so you could go to church in the spring on frozen ground. Well, when the sun hit them, they would thaw out enough so that when you got through church and maybe dinner in the community—by the time you were ready to move, this road was again a quagmire in certain areas. The only cure was to take rock off a stone wall and put them one next to the other in the ruts. And bump over these rocks until you got through these spaces. One of the most famous was on what is now 202 from northeast of Knights Corner on that rise. That was one of the worst places anywhere in the area. One Easter, particularly, when we had a service in Enfield, we were supposed to go down the hill from Packardville. It was impossible to go down, so we started to go to West Pelham and go around by Belchertown. But lo and behold the road was so deep in mud that we had to rebuild a section there with stones from the wall and hop from stone to stone. Les Kimball and I just laid it down, one rock after another until we got through. But it took hours. By the time we got through there and got back out of the road down towards Amherst and Belchertown, we'd used all the afternoon. So we just made the service in time in the evening in Enfield.
- BJ:** I was trying to get that clear. You said you tried to go from Packardville down to Enfield. You couldn't, so you came back up and then had to go down to Belchertown to go around...
- GT:** We were going to go via Pelham Hill because most of that road was better than this road. You see, this road had a lot of "spots" in it. This road has never been a very wonderful road by way of mud. It's paved now, but it was worse. The other road was more used—the 202 road. So we thought we'd get through that better. We headed up the hill and got in these ruts. Right up to the axle. This was in the old days when Chevrolets had high wheels.
- BJ:** People kept going. You kept going, though. You wouldn't say, "I can't make it?"
- GT:** Oh no. We didn't miss a Sunday that I can remember. No, we always—Les Kimball was a tremendous help in all of these. He was a young college fellow and local young man, of course. Les and I learned how to make 'em. I mean, if

- you had too big a mud hole, you just went to work, that's all. Shovels and rocks and chains and all kinds of things. You knew what you had to do and you did it, that's all. Yesterday I was in Andover and one of the members got hung up on a cut stump, a tree had been cut. And she drove up onto this and the body rode up on it, and the wheels just spun. She couldn't get off. Well, we knew what to do. All I did was invade a town wall there, stone wall, started building up under the wheel again until we got her high enough so she could drive over the stump.
- BJ:** Well, you see, it carries on.
- GT:** Oh, it carries all the way to India. I've done the same thing in India—mud holes, getting through mud holes. India's got plenty of mud in the rainy season. So this was good experience.
- BJ:** Good New England stone walls used for all kinds of things.
- GT:** Right. They don't have those, but they have stones. Most experience in a foreign country, I think becomes useful. I used to blast town roads with my dad in Holden. I never dreamed as a kid doing this kind of work, that I would be training young men of India to handle dynamite and caps. But that's the way it worked. Over 50,000 blasts we did and more than 15,000 wells while I was in India, and we never lost a finger, by the Grace of God. But part of it was this experience I gained with my dad.
- BJ:** So in India you were combining this...
- GT:** I did very little of what you would call preaching. My work was in the practical field of water resources. I worked in churches on Sunday, getting other people involved. I used to take teachers out to help, just as I had done in these churches. I took them out and got them involved with these local small groups or churches. That way you could get these people trained. I mean, we didn't need to do all the talking. They knew the language better than we. It was natural for them to take part. And they liked to do it, they enjoyed it. Every Sunday we were out I surrounding communities, but we used the teachers to teach Sunday School and preach and so on.
- BJ:** Are you doing preaching here, then—now?
- GT:** Every Sunday. Next Sunday, Palm Sunday, and Easter are the only two Sundays I've got free for months.
- BJ:** At this church? Right over here?
- GT:** I'll be here for the next two Sundays. I can give you—to back up. Yesterday was Andover. The Sunday before that was Bethlehem, PA. The Sunday before was Hollister, MS. The Sunday before was Nashua, NH, and on it goes.
- BJ:** I see. And in those, you're talking about...

GT: Talking about India. What the dollar does when it goes abroad under the church. That's what we're really reporting on. What out-each money does in terms of work abroad. I enjoy it thoroughly. I have a good time doing it.

BJ: But you said you will be up here...

GT: Because most people, you see, on Palm Sunday and Easter don't want missionary talks, this out-reach business. They want to bear down on Easter.

BJ: (laughs) Bear down on Easter.

GT: So these two Sundays we'll be at the home church. And Christmas the same way. You've got two or three Sundays there.

BJ: You're not doing a service, you'll be part of the congregation.

GT: I'm a Deacon in this church.

BJ: What, as far as if you were doing regular ministry as you were before, what kind of differences do you see in a small church in Pelham now, compared to a small church in Pelham the 40 years ago you were talking about?

GT: The differences are only the differences that we see around us today. I mean, there are no other differences. Of course, people are more into other things than they were in those days. Life styles have changed, and those are reflected in the church. But otherwise, it's very much the same. I don't think that apart from the change in life styles, you could say there is very much change in church life. Of course, the church is in better shape. It's a nice little church now. Have you seen it?

BJ: Not upstairs. I've gone to Historical Society meetings in the basement.

GT: Oh, you've got to see the upstairs. It's lovely. For a small church, it's about as nice as you could find. Simple but very beautiful, I think. And a very faithful group that come there most of the time. 30, 35 pretty much. Some people have tried out Amherst and have come back.

BJ: (laughs) Try on different churches.

GT: We've got Rev. J. W. Fiegenbaum as pastor here. He's head of the Department of Religion just the way J. Paul was, in South Hadley at Mt. Holyoke College.

BJ: Oh, he comes from there?

GT: Yep, he comes from there. He takes a real interest in the community, in the work of the church here, and the families, and provides a thoroughly able ministry I think. We're very fortunate to have a man like that. If you had to hire a man

- according to his worth in terms of scholarship and background, this church could never afford a person like that.
- BJ:** This would have been true back....
- GT:** That would have been true, o course, back in the old days too, because many of the people who have taken this church have been out of the colleges, and that's fortunate. Not many people here now know about Packardville. "Old Timers" in quotes, like Evelyn.
- BJ:** Again, it's true. And you know even as much—I probably know 100 times more than I did a year ago because of doing all this, but still it's a sort of vagueness. I'm not quite sure where Packardville was. I know better today.
- GT:** I'll take you over some time, show you.
- BJ:** That would be great.
- GT:** I'll take you to the spot. You'll never find it without a guide.
- BJ:** I've started hiking down those—I like to take my daughter. But sometimes I get a little uneasy out there by ourselves. That makes me mad. I wish we could just go and not worry about someone's going to pop out of the woods.
- GT:** I wouldn't worry too much.
- BJ:** But just once in awhile with hunters or people who—that reminds me. A lot of people talk about a high alcoholism rate in Pelham back in those days. Was that something you were aware of?
- GT:** I'm sure it was there, but I didn't see a lot of it. You see, I didn't move in that circle. I'm sure it was in the town, The stories they tell about the old days involve bottles.
- BJ:** And lots of hard cider. But that was not an issue that got into your sphere?
- GT:** It didn't get into the particular group I moved with, much.
- BJ:** Do you feel there was an attempt to keep things like that out of the focus? Or that it was somebody else's problem?
- GT:** No. Take some of these old farmers. My goodness, they were wonderful guys. I can think of Herb Adriance, for instance. He was a very picturesque, almost amazing farmer. But he could swear an artful blue streak. I mean, I don't think he could speak a sentence without profanity. But it was a habit with him and he developed it artfully. (Laughs) Herb was an excellent guy. I used to visit with him. I liked him immensely. But you couldn't get him inside a church—any kind of way. He just didn't feel at home. And I think I know why. (Laughs) I mean,

he'd made his bed and didn't want to change it. There are a lot of people like that today.

BJ: So that attempts of out-reach sometimes locally...

GT: Very frustrating. You'd meet a wall. I doubt that the most clever person would pull out some of these fellows.

Tape not clear

BJ: What was in Packardville besides the church?

GT: Sawmill and very little else that I can remember. It was a residential and farming community.

BJ: Where did those people go, say to shop? Belchertown?

GT: Belchertown or Enfield. One of these two. Of course, the Kimballs own a place over here on the other side, but in those days they lived over there.

BJ: Yes, she told me about going to Belchertown a lot.

GT: They had a nice house there, very nice. Long thing. They tell about their itinerant preachers over there. I don't know if Evelyn told you or not, but, in those days one of their preachers wore leather britches in the winter, and he hung them up in the shed during the summer. And they told the story about this fellow preaching one Sunday, a cold Sunday after he'd put on his leather britches. And they noticed he was very nervous that Sunday. He began slapping his thighs like this,, and they wondered what in the world was wrong. Finally he said to the congregation, because he'd hung them up, the wasps had made a nest in this hung-up pair of britches. Finally he said to the congregation, "You know I have the love of God in my heart, but I think I've got the devil in my pants." (Laughs) this is one of the stories that they used to tell.

BJ: How old was this church?

GT: Oh, Evelyn would be better at that than I.

BJ: She told me that her grandfather was involved—or her great grandfather—in building it and there was something about his paying off somebody because they got in debt. It's in the tape. You might like to read her interview.

GT: Oh, I'd be very interested in hearing that. She'd remember more. You see, we—our thirty years in India almost wiped out many of our early memories. We were

rebuilding a whole new set of associations. And I find I have to dig to get back some of the early things. Of course, some are vivid enough to have remained, but other associations have slipped as we're getting our roots back in here since '73. I've found it a little difficult to pull some things up, because of this big chunk outside of the country.

BJ: What were your sermon themes?

GT: I think we've picked up the themes out of theology and the Bible, chiefly, and the illustrations from the day.

BJ: That's what I was wondering. Oh, you know, the last few years everything has to be relevant to everything, you know. But I get a feeling that would not have been the case...

GT: No, I don't think you preached so much in relation to the political scene as today. There was more Bible preaching and illustrations and kin to that. I think as I look back at the sermon outlines that I still have from that day, I think they look awfully dry. (Laughs)

BJ: You wouldn't want to sit there, right?

GT: I'm not sure they were all that interesting (laughs).

BJ: Did the congregation indicate to you that they were pleased, displeased, whatever—or took what they got?

GT: I think they were long-suffering. The Packardville Church, at least, was not a critical congregation.

BJ: How about the one up here?

GT: The one up here was.

BJ: You hadn't mentioned that one much. I have a feeling that you hadn't felt at home that much at the Pelham Hill Church.

GT: It was a duty, a pleasant one, but I didn't feel the warmth that was present in the Packardville Church. That church was a very unusual church, and I've been in hundreds and hundreds of churches throughout this country. One furlough we were in 194 churches, speaking. We started in Maine, worked down to Florida, then we were in Texas for nearly a month, then we went to the Los Angeles area for nearly a month and all around there, then San Francisco for a month all around there, and in between Fresno and other places. And this was constant. Margery was taking a schedule parallel to mine, and we were both speaking. We would miss very few Sundays since we've been home. Last year out of 52 Sundays, 39 I was in pulpits. Well, some of those Sundays are automatically out, like 2 at Easter, 2 or 3 at Christmas. There weren't many Sundays missed. Being in the

pulpit so many times, you get a sense, the feel of a congregation. They're very different. Oh my. The group we were with this Sunday—we had a marvelous time. We had a luncheon yesterday with the Mission Council and the officers of the church. They were a batch of engineers. Now, I'm trained in engineering at Cornell. These fellows like to talk. I got together with electrical and electronic engineers, and we had a marvelous time. A group like this is pure fun for me. They asked intelligent questions. They wanted to know what's the future of missions. Very few people ask this, in most churches.

BJ: Really?

GT: Not many, "Well, what's the future of missions? And what's the future of India? Is Mrs. Ghandi going to be able to do it? What about poverty? Can anybody lick it?" You see, you're getting down to the tough questions. But it's fun to meet with minds on such questions as that. I thoroughly enjoy this kind of exercise.

BJ: You said that the Packardville Church was unusual compared to all that you'd been in.

GT: It's unusual in its warmth and support of a pastor. I said earlier that Packardville made ministers, more than the ministers made the church. I really think that was true. They were very supportive of their pastor. They made him feel welcome and wanted and a part of the congregation, and things like this. And they would do things with and for him in a wonderful way. Not all churches are like that.

BJ: Did the people, did you feel, want to be stimulated in terms of thinking, quite a bit too?

GT: I wouldn't call it a group looking for intellectual answers so much as they were looking for faith answers. You get both in different churches, depending. The Bethlehem church we were in two Sundays ago was another very interesting experience for me. Saturday night we met with the ministers of the town, and this was fascinating because one of them was born in India. His father was there with him; we met him Sunday afternoon. Jack Swart by name. Jack is very feeble now, but Jack worked with me in the same station. His son is a pastor there, nearby in Allentown, PA. He came over and joined the group because we know each other very well. A young man with a family. This was quite a fascinating experience. These men asked intelligent questions which were fun. We sat up quite awhile on Saturday night. I mean, they stayed up beyond the usual time, because we got going. This is a prize business, I call it, when people apply their heart and mind and spirit to the problems of the times and look for Christian answers.

BJ: You feel that's not so common, it's more rare?

GT: It's not rare among the pastors. Amherst clergy are a marvelous group. I meet with them regularly. I'm a member of the Amherst Clergy Fellowship and I meet with them regularly. I thoroughly enjoy this Amherst group of men. This is a

choice bunch: Peter Synder, Arnold Kenseth, Phil Hall, and the Catholic fathers, O'Toole and others. They're just a grand bunch. They have some great discussions.

BJ: I bet.

GT: They really are okay.

BJ: Okay, we're about at the end, so I think we're going to stop it there.

INFORMATION SHEET

Lawrence "Bud" Willson

Born: July 3, 1904

Place of Birth: Pelham, MA

Mother's Name: Jennie Hawley Willson

Father's Name: Charles A. Willson

Spouse's Name: Elizabeth M. Wilson Willson

Date of Interview: April 21, 1979

BJ = Barbara Jenkins, Interviewer

LW = Lawrence "Bud" Willson

Original transcription by Wendy Larson

- BJ:** You'll be 75 in July, is that right. Where were you born?
- LW:** Down the road, a little way from the church on the left, there's a big spruce tree and a house set right there. That's where I was born. (This side of the church?) The other side of the church. I've got a picture of the house here somewhere. This is the house I took down over the Metropolitan... I had a porch on the front there and the wind blew the--- had a hurricane and the wind blew the porch roof right back up on to the other roof.
- BJ:** Oh, that's what that was showing there? (Yes.) When was the hurricane?
- LW:** Ah, that's where Bill Fuller lives now.
- BJ:** When was the hurricane? ('38.) Where was this house before, exactly?
- LW:** That was the Sam Davis place over the other side of the hill over across 202. (In the Hollow?) Yes, Pelham Hollow.
- BJ:** And were they selling these houses very cheaply?
- LW:** Very cheap. I got burned out in '38. I had a house there and I got burned out and everything. And this man who had charge of all the houses over in the Metropolitan area came around and asked me. He says, "I know you've had hard luck and everything." And I said, "Yeah." He says, "Did you have any insurance?" I said, "No." He said, "Look, go over to the Metropolitan, look around. You find a place you think you want, make me an offer for it." So I went over and I found that place there, and I bought it off him for twenty five dollars.
- BJ:** Twenty-five dollars? Did you go down to that lecture the other night at the school where the man talked about Quabbin?
- LW:** Yeah, I was down there. This is on the side of that house. (The one where you were born?) Yeah.
- BJ:** Is that your parents?
- LW:** The house wasn't then where it was when I was born. They moved the house after I was born. They moved it probably as far as from here down to the school. (Why?) Because Amherst Water Company.... And they moved it over. And, there was another place there—I've got a picture of both the places somewhere. And this other place was really the old homestead and my grandfather owned that, and he owned this place here. Well, he moved this one over beside the other one. It's all pine trees in there now, all grown up. Hard to even find where the house was. I know within a few feet, but to go in there and find it, nobody could ever find that. And then, after a number of years, well thirty in fact, the Amherst Water Company bought that out, and tore the houses all down.

- BJ:** What year was that that they moved them?
- LW:** I haven't been able to find out for sure. Now I was born there in 1904 and I think it was either 1905 or 1906 that they moved the house.
- BJ:** And then, thirty years later they had to get rid of them altogether? (That's right.) Did they move them someplace else or just tear them down?
- LW:** No, they tore 'em down.
- BJ:** You know, when you tell me that, it seems like the water departments have had quite an effect, either Amherst or Boston or whatever on Pelham—goodness!
- LW:** They've taken—between the two water companies, they've taken the biggest part of Pelham.
- BJ:** Was there a reason to do it for Amherst? Did they pay a lot, or what was the reason?
- LW:** Well yes, they paid off and everything, but they had the funny idea that these places were polluting the Amherst water. You see, there was a reservoir right across the road up there. And the brook ran down to—there's a reservoir right up in here. This is the reservoir that it's all piped from. The other two reservoirs above that, it's not piped from those at all. And they bought up one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. They bought up eight places and tore them all down.
- BJ:** All right up in that area? (Yes.) All in about 1930?
- LW:** Um, Thirty... Well, they bought my father's place. My father's place was right across the road from the church right on the corner. There was a store, and a house and a store all one, and a post office.
- BJ:** That was your father's place? Oh, I knew there was something like that there.
- LW:** I've looked everywhere to find a picture of that house and I can't find anybody that's got one. Now there's a picture of the corner of it in the Pelham history book, just the corner. And I thought somebody might have a picture of that, but I can't find any. And they bought those houses all up, tore them all down and everything. And then, when they built the new school down here. Well, they were looking for a place for a school, and Amherst Water Department offered to give the town this place where my grandfather lived which was the most central part of the town and the best place for a school. But they wouldn't let 'em build a school there. They offered to give it to the town for the school, but I don't know. Something they said that...oh, the place—they couldn't put a school in there. Something about the drainage, and they could have got that for nothing. And they bought the swamp down there to put the school into.

- BJ:** The first--- there were three schools down here. One burned and then one they tore down for this one, right?
- LW:** That's right. And then the little building across, that was a school. That was one of the first schools down here. Then there was another one right across from where Bill Fuller lives now. Who lives there now? Burek. And I tried to buy that school. I lived in town all my life; I couldn't buy it. A woman from Northampton, or Smith College came over and bought the place like that. Bought out from under me—I couldn't buy it.
- BJ:** Which house was that yow that you wanted to buy?
- LW:** Right across from Bill Fuller. That's Burek's.
- BJ:** You said your grandfather lived there. How long has your family been in Pelham then?
- LW:** Well my grandfather on my mother's side came from up North East Street in Amherst, and he had a place up there, then he bought this up here. Well, at the time when he was living up there, my grandmother lived in Whately. And he used to walk every Sunday; he'd walk over and see her before they were married.
- BJ:** Now this is from here, or from North East Street?
- LW:** From North East Street. Then after they were married, they lived up here. And my Grandfather Willson, I don't know whether he was born in Pelham or not. I think so, but I don't know. I never asked my father whether he was born here or not. I looked back in the town reports, and way back in 1900 he owned eight farms in town here. I don't know where the devil they all went to! I didn't see any of 'em! Well, I barely remember my grandfather. He was a miserable old cuss! But my grandfather Hawley was a very nice old man.
- BJ:** Oh, you're related to the Hawleys. I'm not in tune enough to know who's who in town, for the people that are here. It seems like, I found out you know, that the Burrows and Weavers were all together there. So they've been here for a long time, then, right? Do you know what the first dates are that they were here, the Hawleys?
- LW:** My grandfather was John Hawley. His wife was Laura Hawley. They died shortly after they sold the place, 1935.
- BJ:** Were they the first ones of that family in Pelham?
- LW:** I think they were the first of that family in Pelham.
- BJ:** Why are there two *l*'s in your last name?

LW: That is a funny story. Something I never knew myself until I got into antique cars, and I belong to the antique car club. Well, everybody who belonged, they got a notice of all the members. And I got a letter one day from a man up in Michigan. And he said, "Gee, I see that your name, you're a member of the club there." And he said, it's spelled with two *l*'s. And he said, "I don't know whether you know the reason or not." So then he went on to explain that years ago five brothers came from England, and when they landed in New York City, they put another *l* in their name so they would know their relatives. Now, evidently, they were related to a lot of the single *l*'s, but it's just that they put in the other *l* so they'd know their relatives. Well, there's none anywhere around here. (You're the only one?) In Boston, there's a few in Boston. And I found through the telephone book, I found a few in St. Pete, Florida. My brother, he lived in Texas 25 years, I guess, and he said he looked in the telephone book down there and he found quite a number down there with another *l*. But otherwise, if this man hadn't told me, I would never have known why the other *l* was in there! I've got a little problem right now. I've got a nephew here, and his name is Lawrence A. Wilson, one *l*. (He decided to change it?) His name is spelled with one *l*. You see, my wife's name was Wilson before I married her. And then when she married me, she got the double *l*.

BJ: Oh, you've told that story a lot, I can tell.

LW: Well, I was born here, and when I was four years old, my father bought this store. And he ran the store there and he had to deliver groceries, with a pair of horses and a wagon; go around, take orders for the groceries way over in the Metropolitan, the Hollow there, and all around. And he come back, and in a few days he'd go and deliver those and take more orders. Well, I always used to go with him, and I remember I was a little fellow, we went over one place, nice summer weather, you know, here's this old lady, setting out on the lawn in a chair, rocking chair, smoking a clay pipe! Well no say, that got me. I'd never seen woman smoke! Yes, we used to go all around and everything. And my father was a great horse trader, always trading horses. He'd do well. When my father sold off the place there on the corner by the church, just before that, we had 22 horses. They were all draft horses used to haul wood and railroad ties and telephone poles and lumber—all that stuff. And, I remember well, I had an uncle that had an old Model T Ford. A 1913 I guess it was. And gee, my father had to have a car. So, I don't know, he was around trading horses and he came on this old car, a 1907 I guess it was, Cadillac. It cranked on the side so it wouldn't run over you as you started it up. Oh, he used to play with that, my father. He'd go out and crank and crank that thing. One day he couldn't get it started. He was all out of breath. He went into the house and sat down. I went out, I got it going. "He4y Dad, come on, I got it going?! Oh, we went up to the top of Pelham Hill, down 202, down to Knights' Corner and then we came back around by the pond there're, and back down that back road there. It was chain driven. The chain jumped off. We didn't know anything about cars—my father didn't know anything about it—he'd had horses and everything. Well, he finally got the chain on and we come home. Ah, we had to have a car. So he goes to Northampton to

a Ford dealer and got a brand new Model T Ford, 1913. The Ford then was \$456.50 and they gave him \$56.50 for the old Cadillac. And that year Henry Ford said, "If I sell over so many hundred thousand cars, everybody that buys a car will get \$50 back." So he got \$50 back. When we had the store there, he used to buy all his groceries and everything from a grocery store in Amherst. We used to go down with the horses and wagons and go down and get groceries and things and soda. W. W. Boynton Soda Company of Northampton. Used to drive to Northampton and get a load of soda, and come back. And 'course I was a brat. I had to go everywhere my father went. (Were you the only boy?) No, I had one brother and one sister. Yes, my sister, well she'll be 73 in June. My brother would have been 71 in May. My brother died three years ago.

BJ: When you said the soda—how was that—was it bottled then?

LW: Oh yes and they were taking it and selling it for five cents a bottle. (When was that about?) Oh, that was around 1913, 14, somewhere along through there between '10 and '15.

BJ: `So when you went to school then, you went in that building up there where Mrs. Burek lives? (The one where Mrs. Burek lives.) Do you have some memories from school that are strong?

LW: Well, there's a few things that kind of stays in the mind. We had a family that live dup where Bray does. Their name was Tillson. And there were two boys and a girl. And, I don't know, their mother died real young. The kids were small. And the oldest boy, oh, he was a—always a going to do something, you know. And he used to like to ride horseback. And my father had a horse he wanted to take—they used to have, every week, they'd have horse auctions down in Holyoke, and he wanted to take this horse down there to sell. And he asked this boy, and he said, "Sure." Well, he was supposed to start at a certain time. Come into the school in the morning and everything. I don't know, he went up to the teacher's desk for something, turned around, jumped through the window, went over there. Pretty quick I see him going by on horseback to Holyoke. That I can remember very well!

BJ: Why did he go out the window?

LW: Well, he didn't know if she'd let him go out the door!

BJ: The more I hear about school in those days, I think, the less I envy the teachers. I think it would have been pretty hard with the kids doing all kinds of crazy things.

LW: Well, we had some miserable teachers, and we had some very nice teachers, very nice. We had a man teacher one time there and they couldn't nobody live with him. They had to kick him out. Oh, he was a roughneck! (What would he do?) Whale hell out of us. Yes, if they didn't toe the mark... We had two or three very nice teachers there.

BJ: Remember anything else beside the boy jumping out of the window?

LW: Well, not too much.

BJ: Well, I bet you got into some trouble you're not telling about or something like that. Didn't you ever? Did you ever get into trouble?

LW: No, no, I stayed out of trouble. And when it come to Halloween or night before the Fourth or something, a bung co our raising the devil.. Well, I'd go with 'em, but if they started to destroy town property, I'd beat it for home and stayed there. That I couldn't see. I could see doing most anything to have fun, like putting a wagon up on top the schoolhouse roof, or stealing watermelons, or something like that, but...otherwise, if they wanted to go and break up stuff, no I didn't want nothing to do with them at all.

BJ: Did you graduate from eight grade?

LW: Well, that's a funny story. We went thee to eight grade. Then we went to Amherst to Junior High School, which had an eighth and ninth grade. And went to ninth grade. Then went from ninth grade into high school, which the year that I went, the eighth and ninth grade both went to high school at the same time. Well, I didn't finish out the freshman year. I got where I couldn't hear well, and it was hard to get along. Those days, they didn't bother much. You know, if people couldn't hear anything, they let 'em go. And gee, some of the subjects I couldn't get. The teacher kept me after school one day. It was a matter of I was getting a D in algebra. Well, I said, "Gee, I don't understand it." Well, he said, "I've explained it and everything." But I said, "I can't hear well enough." So a couple of hours he was working and he showed me all about it. He was very good. Then after that I got along fine in that, but other things, my hearing was so bad that... That's like going to anything—now, on the Historical Committee. I didn't want to, but I was on for four years. But to go to the meetings and everything. I couldn't get everything that they said. And I told them, I resign, I just didn't want it. I belonged to the Pelham Fire Department. Well, the boys around, they liked me, and they wanted to put me in office there, and I told 'em no. They meant well. I told them, "You put me in office and I'll just resign. I'll have nothing to do with it because I can't hear well enough." Now, my father was a selectman, and he was assessor. Oh, I don't know, he was most everything here—the road commissioner. How he ever got along I don't know, because he couldn't hear. He was very bad. I don't know how he ever got through those meetings.

BJ: So you inherited it, you inherited the problem?

LW: Well yes. The funny thing was, I guess I was the first. I had the flu and, I don't know, my mother and father separated just before that and I lived with my father there and he being hard of hearing and everything, I suppose he didn't notice it. Well, I was sick as a dog there for quite a little while. Probably if I had been taken to a doctor right away then, but then it came on to me after that. And then,

well my sister, it came onto her, and my mother was in Boston and she had my sister go down there, and had her tonsils and adenoids out at once. Been all right ever since. And my brother, he got that way, and I don't know, he had several operations and everything, but nothing ever worked, never. And, I don't know, they have an operation today that they, possibly yes, but they're not sure.

BJ: Is it where the little bones in your ear need to get unstuck?

LW: Now there was a woman lived right here, and she was hard of hearing. She went and had an operation. Okay, fine. Then she went and had it on the other ear, all right. But today it all came back and she's wearing a hearing aid. Oh, she got after me—why don't I go and have that operation. Ah well I says I don't know. It probably wouldn't work. "Well," she says, "you could try it and find out." She says, "It worked with me." But now she don't have anything to say about that. (Well, you've lived so long with it too.) Sure. Well, it isn't really nice to be that way, but could be worse. There's a lot of things I don't hear that it's a good thing I don't!

BJ: All the gossip and all those things. The nagging and all that! Convenient turning off—that's what I always hear about hearing aids!

LW: But as to the heredity of the hearing, my father was hard of hearing. They gave him a lot of quinine—he was very bad sick and they gave him a lot of quinine and it brought it on to him. (Oh, that's right. Then it wouldn't be inherited.) And then, my mother's mother, my Grandmother Hawley, she was hard of hearing and all her family was that way on her side. But on his, no. And it skipped a whole generation.

BJ: And then yours got it again. So when you quit school, what did you do?

LW: I went right out and went to work. I went to work at a silk mill down here on Route 9. There was a silk mill down there. (In Amherst?) Yes. And I went down there and worked down there. And well, the electric car ran from the Community Hall to Amherst, and I used to take the car to Amherst, but I found that I was walking just as much as if I walked right down through. So I go right down through here right down through the woods right down to the silk mill and didn't have to walk as far as I did when I walked to the car and then from the car down.

BJ: Where exactly was that mill?

LW: You know where, Amherst Fields? Just this side of there where that little bridge is. The brook goes through there. It was just this side of the brook on the right going to Belchertown. Then, they had the Fish Rod factory down here, and I thought well, I wouldn't have to walk only half as far. So I went down there and went to work. Fifty-five hours a week for eight dollars.

BJ: Everyone I've talked to in Pelham, it seems like, worked there at some time, and boy, they know what wages they got too. It wasn't that much.

LW: And well, I worked there through the winter. And I'm an outdoor boy. I like to be outdoors when spring comes. And weather like this? I couldn't stay in the place. I said to the boss one morning I didn't like the job I had anyway. (What were you doing?) Well, they had a bunch of girls winding the fish rods. And I was in the room.

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...so that was my job, to do that. But there was a bunch of girls around. I didn't want to be in there. 'Course later on I felt different. So I says to the boss, I says, "Have you got a different job for me?" "Well," he says, "If you can't do what we've got for you to do, you know what you can do." I says that's right and I picked up my dinner pail and I walked out. And I got right down here, and they were working on the road there. The boss says, "Hey, what are you doing? Aren't you working?" I just quit but after hat I said, "Gosh, I got to get outdoors." "Well," he says, "you want to get outdoors?" I says, "Yeah." "Well," he says, "Can you do what these men are doing?" I says, "If I can't, I don't want to work" "Okay, then go to work—three dollars a day." Quite a difference. Then after I worked with my father a long time there. Well, I got to drive the team, go out in the woods and work and everything and then, oh, we had a steam sawmill and these horses and everything. I used to run a lot of errands. I got ahold of an old car. The boys downtown, somebody left them some money and they bought this car. Oh, it was an expensive car, big touring car, seven-passenger touring car. They went out one night and the lights went out on them. Then they went out through the lot, and there was a guy wire on a telephone pole—hit the guy wire and it tore the top off and everything. Well, I bought the car cheap, and I used to go every morning. I would leave here and go down to Amherst Feed and Grain Store and load the car up with grain and hay and take it up to the mill where the horses were, and the feed and everything. And I did a lot of that besides working around the mill ad everything. (Where was that mill?) That mill was—you go straight over across 202, down to the bottom of the first grade and then out to the left out in the woods there out near Purgee Brook. We had this sawyer, and he had a little shanty near the mill and he lived there in the shanty. And well, one night the mill burned up. Well, they went out and bought another mill. Before, we had steam power and they found an old gas engine, one cylinder gas engine—big one that would run the mill. But in the winter, it was almost impossible to start that thing. Well, the sawyer had this cook stove in the shanty there. And fellow went in one morning—oh, the old stove was part near red hot, going like the dickens. A five-gallon pail setting on the stove. He says, "Hey Shorty, what you going to do, take a bath?" "Gawd," he says. "Take a bath this weather? No." "Well," he says, "I see you're heating water up there." "That aint water, it's gasoline." Four gallons of gasoline in that pail, all open, boiling. When it boiled,

he took it out and turned it into the engine and it started right up and go along., Well that guy, when Shorty said that was gasoline, he made a beeline down the road and he never went into that shanty again! That was enough of that for him. Well, I worked for my father after that for quite a long time until 1925, I guess it was. He bought a truck. Then I was driving truck.. And later on, I don't know, I got fed up with the place here, and I took off and went to Boston. Well, my mother was down there. And I got down there and I got a job, chauffeur's job, driving around, and I was down there for a couple of years.

BJ: About how old were you at that period of timer?

LW: I was about 26. And I was there for a couple of years. I had a good job. With that Depression, boy, I was lucky to find a job and I got a job down there, which paid twenty-five dollars a week with my board and room and everything. And it was a good job. Well, after a couple of years, I got ed up on tat. I had to come back to the country. This living down there I didn't like. And I came back here and I took over the trucking business from my father. And I was in that up to fifteen years. Then I went, I sold out, I sold out the trucking business and my Grandfather and Grandmother Hawley at their place down there. We had a picnic out there in back of the house. There's the house I was born in. (Oh, that's a pretty house.) It was very nice.

BJ: I can't get used to seeing these houses like this with no trees around. You know, when I hear older people talk about Pelham and they could see all over from here to there and everywhere because there weren't the trees, you know.

LW: Now, up in the museum, I have a picture of that house, and I have a picture of the other house that my grandfather had, and they're blown up so they're much bigger, and they're up there.

BJ: Is that when you were a chauffeur? You certainly look like a chauffeur. I hope that's what you were doing. That's the outfit all right. Did you think you were pretty dapper in that outfit?

LW: Oh boy, yes. And you know, go down into Boston, with this chauffeur's cap on, he holds up all the traffic and says, "Come on." (Who were you a chauffeur for?) Mr. Beech. (Who was Mr. Beech?) The funny part was that Mr. Beech he was in the plumbing business in Cambridge, Mass. And the big boss, he drove his own car and everything, but this guy, he had a chauffeur.

BJ: Was this taken for something special?

LW: No, nothing special. Mother wanted me to go and have some pictures taken. She want4ed some pictures. So that's the reason I had it taken. Oh, he was quite a boy in his day. (this guy here?) I used to go over in the Quabbin over in those towns that are completely gone now and dance most every night in the week. Six nights a week go over there. Very seldom ever took a girl to a dance. Go to dances and dance all evening, go home. (The gay bachelor, right?) Yup! Well,

they had a dance down here on Route 9, down what they called Holland Glen down here. That's all gone now, down near Belchertown Pond. And there was a dance there every Saturday night. And I used to go down there quite a bit. Well, there was this girl—she lived right across the road from the silk mill down there. She was a beautiful girl, and I didn't think I was good enough to ask her to dance. I was too shy. I couldn't ask her. Well, it went along for a few years, and I met her one day. She says, "You remember me?" I says, "You look very familiar." She told me who she was, I says, yes. She says, "We used to go down to Holland Glen to dances." And I said, yes. She says, "You never asked me for a dance!" I said, "Damn fool I was." Yup I used to dance six nights a week.

BJ: Just regular dancing, or a special kind of square dancing or just...

LW: Well, it was fifty-fifty. About half squares. And the square dances I liked very much. Well here, a few years ago, she and I went taking these Western squares. (That's different?) Oh yes, much. And well, we got along pretty good. But the Western squares, they could ball you all up. You had to go by the caller, and I couldn't hear the caller well enough. (What kind of square dancing was this other kind?) Well, the old-fashioned square dance they went right along. Once you knew the dance, it didn't make any difference about the caller. You could go right through the dance. Now my father, he couldn't hear at all and he called these dances, every square dance, no troubles at all. But the Western square is a lot of turning, turning, and she'd get dizzy.

BJ: So you couldn't hear and she got dizzy. I can see why you didn't do that much.

LW: And, back where I was getting to Orient Springs here, that was a very popular place. People from Springfield and Holyoke used to come out on the electric cars on Sunday to have picnics out there. And they had a dance hall down there and a store. They could buy candy, ice cream things like that. And they used to have big times down there.

BJ: I was gong to say, you went to those places every night? Who sponsored those or were those in private places?

LW: Well, most of those dances were in Enfield Greenwich, Dana, Millington, Atkinson Hall. Somewhere every night there was a dance somewhere. (And who would have them?) Well, I don't know. They were sponsored by some association in town. A bunch get together and they wanted to have a dance. And then too, here in Pelham, we used to have on Saturday night in the winter, there's be a dance in somebody's house. We'd go from house to house, around different places most every Saturday night. We had big times. Well, when I went down to Lexington there to work, I didn't know what to do with myself. Lord, you can't go to the movies six nights a week. I didn't know what to do with myself. And people down there say, "Well, what do you do up there in the sticks?" I says, "That's where we have fun." And I used to come home nearly every weekend and couple of times I brought fellows from down there and we'd go out Saturday

- night and dance. And “Gosh,” they’d say, “I never knew there was such fun.” I says, “You don’t know the half of it.” I wouldn’t live in the city if they give me the place.!
- BJ:** It seems like in talking to you and some of the other people that you went that direction a lot more than say into Amherst when there were those towns down there. Is that right, that Pelham people seemed to go that way more?
- LW:** Yes, they used to go that way more; that is, the younger people, because we had more fun.
- BJ:** Because it seems like now, since there’s nothing over there, it’s all changed and the identification is with Amherst now a lot more.
- LW:** Well, I used to go to those dances, and well, there’s been quite a few times that I’d get home and change my clothes just in time to go to work in the morning. But I always went to work. My brother was in Boston for the earlier part of his life. He worked in the Necco Candy factory down there, and well, he wasn’t around here too much. He was more of a city guy. I wouldn’t live in the city if you give me the place! Lexington wasn’t too bad because that’s out. It’s not like being in Cambridge or Boston. Well, we had good times around here. My brother, after awhile, he came back home for awhile and he worked for my father. But, if he went out to a dance at night, he couldn’t work the next day. My father said that was different. It didn’t make any difference what time I stayed out, I was at work in the morning.
- BJ:** Did you go into Amherst very much at all for things?
- LW:** Oh yeah, quite a bit. They used to have dances at the Masonic Hall and dances at the Odd Fellows Hall, and the moving pictures. Otherwise, that’s about all the entertainment we had around here. Lot of us people when we were young we didn’t know how to dance or anything, and E. P. Bartlett that ran the fish rod factory, his granddaughter, Marie Aldrich, she—well, those people had money and she learned to dance and everything, so she put on dancing lessons for us. She taught us how to dancer. Otherwise, we were dumbbells. We would never have known how to dance.
- BJ:** Did boys take dancing lessons too? (Sure.) Good.
- LW:** In fact, going to those places there, now, I had a couple of fellows. Well, we used to pal around quite a lot and they’d go along. Well, they’d go out and drink. One night there, one of the fellows said, “Gee, we’re always going out in your car, how about going in mine?” And I said, “Well, okay.” Up in Wendell now, went up to the dance. I don’t know, it got to be around eleven o’clock and I didn’t know where they were. I couldn’t find ‘em. Well, there was a fellow from town that I knew. He was there and I went over and asked him if he’d give me a ride home. He said, “Sure.” And well, I came home. Those guys didn’t get home till nine o’clock the next morning! As to where they were, they were down over the

- hill, both drunk. They were so drunk they couldn't drive the car. I said, "That's the last time we go in your car! Hereafter I go in mine."
- BJ:** I hear there were a lot of stills around here, and also cider brandy, or all these things.
- LW:** Oh gosh, there was all kinds of stuff, you know. Dandelion wine, blueberry wine, elderberry wine, hard cider...
- BJ:** I can't remember who it was—Mr. Campbell or somebody. Mr. Burrows was saying they were going up North Valley Road and it seemed like every place—they would say there was a still there, and a still there, so I thought that must have been the place up there at the time, or something.
- LW:** And they used to doctor it. Now, over at Sondereggers, that place, well, the old house that was there, these people lived in there. And my father used to go around buying hay. He'd buy it standing, and we'd make the hay and everything and put it in the barn there. Then as we needed it, we got it. Well, the people that lived there, the daughter, she was married and they were about my age. And he came out one day and asked us if we'd like a drink of sweet cider. Sure, I don't mind! I used to hate haying—if there was anything I hated, it was haying. And so he came out with a glass of that cider. Oh, it was just as nice and sweet and smooth as anything you ever drank. But boy,, it had a kick of a mule. They put raisins in it, and brown sugar, and I don't know what they put in it. And then it aged. About to glasses of that, and I didn't know whether I was haying or what I was doing I didn't care. Oh, she came out and gave the devil for getting us drunk. I says, "Gee, that was a good thing, Helen." 'Cause I hate haying, and I didn't know whether it was haying or what I was doing.
- BJ:** When they talk about stills there, though, is that cider brandy or is that regular whiskey or something?
- LW:** Well, I don't know. I never went for any of that stuff. I know the boys all used to...
- BJ:** I just hear about it, you know, and I don't know that much about it.
- LW:** I know when I was young, back there, there was a lot of hard cider, cider brandy, stuff like that—wine. But that's something I never cared about.
- BJ:** I wanted to ask you about that cemetery—not the Quaker one, but the other one. Is that the Arnold? (Yes.) Because today when I was talking to Louise Partridge, she said they were going to have some program at the Historical Society about those two cemeteries, and I said you probably knew quite a bit about that one from living up there.

LW: You've never been there? Would you like to see it? (Sometime, yes.) Some time when you have the time. I have quite a lot of time, and I'd gladly show you the place there.

BJ: It must not be very big, the Arnold Cemetery.

LW: No, small cemetery. Have you been to the one, the Packardville cemetery there where Gibbs' "poisoned oysters stone" is there?

BJ: I like the one on up where I live too on North Valley Road. Does that have two names. Do they call that the West Cemetery, and the Cook something cemetery? (Cook Cemetery, that's way up. Have you been there?) Yes. That's not the one they all the West Cemetery too? (No.) That's another one?

LW: Well, there's this cemetery right here (That's Harkness.) Harkness cemetery. Gee, I don't know...

BJ: Well, they call it that in Parmenter, the history book, but it sounds like they're describing the Cook Cemetery, so maybe they called it different things at different times, or something. I'm not sure about that.

LW: Then there's a cemetery way up on Mt. Lincoln. (That's what I read in there,) Yes, that's kind of hard to find. (You've been up there though?) I've been there.

BJ: You've probably hiked all around the woods. It sounds like—if you're outdoors... right. It seems to me that each of the people I've talked to have been outdoors people. It seemed like living here, or if you stayed here, that's what you like.

LW: Yeah, most of my time has been spent outside. For just a short time I worked in the silk mill. I worked in the fish rod factory for a short time. I worked in a chair factory outside of Fitchburg, outside of Gardner. I worked up there for awhile, but the factory I don't like.

BJ: Before you dropped out of school because you couldn't hear, did you have some idea of what you thought you wanted to do\?

LW: Well, my father's business, mostly. I was interested in horses, and later on in trucks.

BJ: So the fact that you dropped out of school didn't make that much difference to your plans?

LW: No, not much. Now I had a friend. We went to school together. And he finished high school and he took a two-year course at the University in forestry. And then he applied for jobs all around. He wanted a job, he didn't much care what it was—something, a job. We had to work and he applied around, and finally, oh, he and I was all ready, all planned to go to Canada. I had a new car and we were

going to go to Canada. And he was all ready to go, and he called me up. He said, “Gosh, I can’t go. I just got word from the construction company in Connecticut. I’m going to work for them.” Up in White River Junction, so another friend of mine, he wanted to go. So we started. And we got up to White River Junction, and I went looking around and I found Lane Construction Company that he worked for. And we went to see him. (What are these?) That is old. (I can see that!) 1909. I never had that one. All these others I’ve had. I haven’t had that one either—it’s a 1929 Chrysler. There’s a Studebaker. There’s some of that I’ve taken around to the meets that I’ve been to. There! That is the, well, not, it isn’t that one, but one just like it was the one I went to Canada in. The only new car I ever had in my life.

BJ: So, this is your business—antique cars—now. I didn’t realize that until I saw your cars out there—your Cadillac—yes, hobby. It’s not a profit maker. (My daughter, when she got married, they used the old car.) Oh, that’s fun. Do you have old ones out in the garage like this now, or just the one?

LW: I’ve got a ’38 LaSalle out there and I’ve got a ’59 Edsel. (An Edsel! I can remember when those came out) I sold 10 old cars. I get ‘em, fix ‘em up. There’s a ’28 Chrysler. I worked at Amherst College for a little while—that’s taken at Pratt Field.

BJ: Sounds like you’ve done a little bit of everything for work. (A little bit of everything.) Well, it looks like a hole in the ground.

LW: It is. North Valley Road up here. Just up a little ways right on the turn here. You know where the railing is. The whole road slid down. Twice. That one was in ’55. It slid down in ’38 first. The whole thing went right down. It was just—you could just barely walk along the edge of the bank there.

BJ: I never knew that. What did they have to do then, go all the way around through Shutesbury?

LW: Well, no—go up here to the church and Meetinghouse Road.

BJ: Oh sure. I’m not used to that being open in the wintertime. I guess they had to keep that one open.

LW: Yeah, that was quite a thing when that thing went down. (What was that from, water?) Yeah.

BJ: Because it was just dirt, right, at that time? In 1950 it was too?

LW: It’s a wonder nobody went down on it. (Hm, just like that! Right down!

INFORMATION SHEET

Marion Wilson

Born: January 4, 1904

Place of Birth: Amherst, MA

Mother's Name: Julia Gertrude Presho

Father's Name: Franco Freeman Fisk

Spouse's Name: William Wilson, deceased

Date of Interview: April 20, 1981

BJ = Barbara Jenkins, Interviewer

MW = Marion Wilson

Original transcription by Janice Fair and Barbara Jenkins

- BJ:** How do you happen to be in Pelham. How long have you been here?
- MW:** '32 or '33 I guess.. My daughter's going to be fifty-four, so it was forty-nine years this June.
- BJ:** So, you both came here after you were married. Were either of you from Pelham originally?
- MW:** My mother was born here. In this house. (What was your mother's name?) Presho. (Oh, I've seen that name.) Yes, in the cemetery. (So, your mother was born here and then this was still...) Well, my grandfather was born, not in this house, but there was another old house up the road, in 1836. They came here from Oakham. (Oakham?) Oakham, MA. It's down near Worcester. They said there wasn't land enough down there, so they came up here. When they bought this, where Jennings live now, was part of our pace here. When my grandfather's sister got married, they divided a piece of land there for them.
- BJ:** Did you hear them talk about it very much, what it was like up here?
- MW:** Well, I used to come here when I was a little girl, to visit my grandfather. He was seventy when I was born. I used to come out here with my father, my mother too. We lived in Amherst. I was born in Amherst and grew up there. (And your husband, was he from...) He was from South Amherst.
- BJ:** So you've really got Pelham ties the longest then. (I would say.) Now this house here, of course, has been here for a long time. A lot of the houses up here are relatively new.
- MW:** When we came here there were no houses between here and the Page's corner.
- BJ:** And yet, from what I understand now, there was a road, they call it Robinson Road that comes out up here?
- MW:** Comes out just above the high tension, that road went back and there was a Robinson family there, there was a couple other houses thee when I was a small child.
- BJ:** Were they on the end of the road, like toward Buffam Road?
- MW:** No, the Robinsons lived up nearer the other road. Nearer North Valley. I don't remember who did live out back here, but I know there was a couple of houses, but they are all gone.
- BJ:** They were gone even by that time? (Yes.) There were houses sort of left? I knew that there was that road through there, and I never quite knew how many houses, it doesn't sound like that many. Two or... (It's not that awful long

distance, it's not too far.) I've walked it once. (My mother used to go that way to school, that's where he school house was.) Right, Mr. Burrows told me that it was on there. (Right near where the high tension comes out, right up on that corner.) I've told several people about it, and they don't remember that school house, but it's actually on the Robinson Road, before it came on North Valley, right? (Yes.) And your mother went to school there?

MW: Yes, my mother and her two brothers went there to school. There wasn't the main road then. (So Robinson Road was the main road, not Buffam Road!) Then there was a cross road that came from above White's there. (Is that Fales?) Yes, that came up to that corner too, on North Valley. That used to go over the hill, and down Sand Hill there. That was a main road too. (Now, Sand Hill...) It's about the end of where the high tension is, not the end of it, but you come up and then you come around up by Houston's on West Pelham Road, Shutesbury and come down. (Does it end up in Shutesbury somehow?) Yes, somewhere there.

BJ: I think that a lot of people are not aware of these old roads. And now that I realize where you live, I'd like to see if we could get this straight on the tape a little bit, so people listening would know what you meant. This road that we are speaking of, Robinson Road, that is a little bit north. (Yes, just above the quarry here, the state quarry right here above my house. That road goes back.) And comes out by the high tension on North Valley. (Yes.) Okay, that one I know. Then this one down here, that I mentioned was the Fales Road that goes across by Shepard's there, and Brad White. Then you cross, it goes down... (It comes out there back of Hosmer's, this side of it.) Right, by the stone house, by Hosmer's, right. Where does it come out on North Valley, does it come out by Quarry Road there? No, it comes out by the high tensions, not quite that far. It comes in to the Robinson Road. Then it goes in to North Valley Road.) And you are saying that those roads actually were more main roads than... (Than this one here.) If you lived in Shutesbury then, how would you get down? (The road was here, but it wasn't a main road. Freddy Shepard, when he was young, he cut that road back so it make a fire road.) which road now? (Between us and Hosmer's there.) Did it have a name, or just that Fales or was it called Fales only on the other side of the road. (I don't know whether they called it Fales or what. I think so, but it came out there and went along into the other road there.) And those just closed down, because people stopped living on them, is that how you remember it?

MW: There was nobody lived on this main road, back through here. It was on this road here they lived, back here.

BJ: Did anybody live on this road that you are referring to?

MW: Not that I know of.

BJ: I've seen some old maps and I can't remember if they're little.... (It's not too long a road, really. Because it comes into the Robinson Road.) They would have been cutting through there to go to the tip of Pelham Hill? (Yes.) And the cemetery up there? (Yes.)

What kinds of things do you remember when you were a child and would come out here and visit, anything particular about the way it looked?

MW: This house was nice. It had clapboards on it, it was yellow and brown. When we came, the clapboards were pretty near all pulled off and it was a mess. (Had anyone been in there?) My father and mother owned it. After my grandfather died. And the Garrows lived here. They took the clapboards off and what not. It was a mess, so when we fixed it over, we couldn't get the clapboards during the war, we couldn't buy them, so we settled for these shingles. (Those grey shingles?) Yes. (Those have been on since the thirties then?) The forties.

BJ: You mentioned your daughter was fifty-four, so you had your children when you moved out here then?

MW: Two of them. I had one after I came here. Bill was born on my daughter's birthday, fourteen years later. Like starting a new family.

BJ: Well, you've done that a lot, then. You started with your grandchildren, and just kept having family along.

Did your husband farm here? What did he do?

MW: He worked on the railroad. He drove from here to Springfield. New York Central Systems. (Was that unusual to go that far for a job then?) When we came here there was no jobs, you couldn't get a job. Buy, beg, or steal. It was during the Depression there. Probably we'd never come here otherwise. (This house was available, right?) Yes, it was my father's mother's and they told us we'd better come here and live here, instead of running up a bill we couldn't pay for. (Did he have that job at the time you moved here?) No, he had no job when we came here—no job, no car. (Then he got a car to drive—how did he go to Springfield?) We got a car. We always had a car before but we got rid of it. We couldn't afford to keep it up—we didn't have a job.

BJ: So you were here pretty much with your daughter, by yourself, during the day? (My son and my daughter.) What was that like? How did you spend your day?

MW: We had hot water in the house, we had no electricity. We carried our water from the spring. (How far away was that spring?) Across the road—quite a little ways. (Is it still there?) It's where we get our water now. Piped in. We had no electricity. Then when they put the rural electrification in, we got it then—1944 or something. We had to guarantee them \$21 a month for five years. Larry

LaFlamme , we went in together so we had to pay the \$21 between the two of us. (Was that hard to used that much electricity?) No, Larry had this mink farm up there. He bought this farm up there, and he had a mink farm. And he wanted a ten-ton freezer so he had to have electricity. (A ten-ton freezer to keep the pelts?) No, to keep the feed to feed the mink. (Oh, you mean to keep feed in the freezer.) Yes. He bought fish, like the heads and entrails. He got horses and took care of them—old horses. It didn't take long to use up the \$21.

BJ: Did it make quite a difference to you when you got electricity?

MW: Oh my goodness, yes. When I got electricity, I turned on every light in the house. And went outside and looked. (Were you using kerosene lamps or what?) Yes, kerosene lamps. We had no electric radio, we had a battery radio and every time we wanted to listen to the radio, the battery would go. Well, anyway, we survived.

BJ: Did you have a cook stove?

MW: Yes, the room out here was in such terrible shape that we used this for a kitchen. Later we fixed that up, redid the house, but it needs doing again. (You had a wood cook stove. Did you have an icebox, or what did you use for that?) No, we had no ice. (I know some people around here used to cut ice and keep it in...) No, we didn't do that. (So, how did you keep things like that then?) We went from hand to mouth. (You didn't keep butter around or something like that?) We'd need probably enough for a week. We had a place down cellar, on a rock to keep stuff cold. (On a rock. Okay, that's what I was wondering. I know some people had it in the ground.)

BJ: The reason I was asking about the sort of daily routine is I haven't had a chance to ask too many women about work and how long it took. It seems I've interviewed more men or something, but I know washing used to take a day and a half or more to get the whole process done. The reason why I'm asking some of these things is that I remember some of them. I'm sure that now I'm enough older that like my daughter would have no conception of what it was like to do the wash before you threw it into a...(with a scrub board.) With a scrub board, okay. (Well, I did have a Maytag washer with a gasoline motor on it.) That probably wasn't till later then? (I bought that when I was first married. We lived on a fruit farm in South Amherst and they didn't have electricity there either, on Markert's place. I don't know whether you know where it is, on Bay Road, way at the top of the hill before you go into Belchertown. My husband was brought up there.) I know some people who live almost there. So you had a power washer, with the wringer and the tube and that kind of thing? (But we didn't always use it. We had a scrub board too.) Did you have a big garden? Did you prepare a lot of your own food?

- MW:** Yeah, well we had a pretty good sized garden. One year we had a nice garden. We went up to my mother's and father's in Plainfield. When we come back, Foote's cows had got in and ate it all up.
- BJ:** Whose cows?
- MW:** Foote's. Down where Virginia White lives was a pasture and they had their young stock up in there, pastured out. So Mrs. Foote said, "Well, you should put a fence around your garden." (That was the solution to that, right?) So it wasn't long before they got out again and we put 'em in the barn, and we went to the field driver, and after that we never had any trouble.
- BJ:** So people talk about how it used to be better with the neighbors and everything. You probably had problems with neighbors back then too, and much as, you know.
- MW:** Well, we just had the cattle. Our nearest neighbors was down to the corner, the Graves'—Virginia Ezbicki and Freddie Knowles' wife there, Elizabeth Knowles. They lived in the place right on the corner, the white house—Page's corner. Her grandfather was a Page, John Page. (Whose grandfather was that again?) Elizabeth Knowles.
- BJ:** I know that if you start asking about some people, they all begin to be related it seems like, or something.
- MW:** They used to be more so than they are now, I think. Kind of run out. Or moved out.
- BJ:** And so your husband continued to work at the place in Springfield?
- MW:** He drove town truck for awhile, till he got the railroad job and he went down there to work. (And he worked there till he retired?) Yes.
- BJ:** Now, you said you were here during the day, no neighbors, did you think about that as being particularly lonely?
- MW:** It never bothered me. (It was just the way you lived, right?) Yes, I was never very neighborly with my neighbors anyway. You know what I mean. I never got close to them. I don't believe in getting close to anybody.
- BJ:** You said your children were fourteen years apart, so your older child was going in to school. Where did she go to school?
- MW:** She and Harold went down here to Valley School. Where the old school house was, where the new one is now. (Right.) They went up on the hill too, Miss Collis, she taught up at the Rhodes School. (Was there a bus at that point?) A bus took them in. They were carried from here down to the corner, to the main

road. And then Raymond Robinson drove the school bus, and they went on the school bus into Amherst later. (Oh I see.) To the high school and junior high. They graduated from Amherst High, those two. [edited section]

BJ: No, when you moved out here, Quabbin Reservoir would have been in the process of being made. Do you remember much about that as far as much talk about it or anything like that? (Yes.) What comes to mind?

MW: Well, people worked over there—cut the trees, and they were burning all those trees and everything, and the sparks used to fly over. (Oh, really?) Yeah, way from Quabbin there. It's a wonder the woods didn't get afire, you know.

BJ: Actually, you know, I have to go back. Do you know John Hunt? Lives on top of the hill? (I've heard of him.) He worked doing buildings and grounds things there, and he talks about—there was a fire though from something during World War II when they were practicing dropping bombs in the Quabbin area, that's what it was. I knew there was something about a firer he said they had to fight. Do you remember people talking about having to move out of Quabbin and that kind of thing?

MW: Oh yes, they bought their houses. They had to find places to live and they moved all the bodies from the cemeteries.

BJ: Did you remember people talking about it being upsetting to them, or did you now anyone specifically that had to move?

MW: No, I wasn't close to them. There was a lot of families, they just burnt their houses a lot of them—they didn't burn them, the Quabbin did, you know. (So, in other words, they didn't move every house, they burned a lot of them down?) No, they burnt a lot of them. Some of them bought 'em and like Lumley's there, they took one of those big houses down, they numbered it all up and they moved it and put it up here. That was probably the late thirties, I would say, maybe early forties. The Lumleys have been here pretty near as long as I have. Bud Willson, over here, they took down a building and part of that house. Well, they sold their home—is part timbers and stuff like that. From over there. (The house they're in now?) No, I think Fuller lives up there. (I talked to Bud in one of these, and he talked about that.)

BJ: Do you remember the hurricane of '38?

MW: I guess I do. That was terrible. We had a big barn here, and it took the whole roof right off. We had just put a new roof on it. And it took the whole timbers and everything. They flew across the road. Timbers come back, great big pieces come down right back of the house here. Just right own in the earth. (Straight down?) Yup. (Were you here by yourself then?) No, my husband was home that day. He had an old Buick tractor out there that he had made, and it had a wood steering wheel, and when the sheets of tin come off the barn and it sliced right off, and he just got off the way or he'd of gotten it. It was going so swift. (Did it come

up suddenly, or what do you remember that it was like?) We were out doors and you could hear this terrible wind coming. Well, the wind blew like this the other night, Saturday night, I guess, it started and I thought, "Oh my goodness," but it stopped. It was raining and this wind began to blow. We had chickens out in the field there and it tipped them over and killed quite a lot of them. We grabbed all we could and we threw them in here to the back room. We weren't using it then. We saved some. It took the whole top of the barn off—we had a big barn out there. We never built it up again because we weren't going to have cattle then. I didn't own it at that time, and I couldn't get help to put the roof back on. My mother and father owned it and they didn't want to invest that money to put it back. (Were there a lot of trees down around here?) Oh yes, couldn't get down the road. They come up through with a saw and axes and trimmed out the road so you could get through. In Amherst too, they had lost a lot of trees.

BJ: Were there a lot of trees around here? What was it like when you first moved here?

MW: Well, it was more open land. Over here it was all open land or farm land. But my husband was never a great farmer. He wasn't interested in that. (Your grandfather farmed it then, and then it sort of died out as a working farm with them it sounds like.) Yes. (That sounds pretty typical. That was the generation it seems, that did farm, and then by the time...) You see, my grandfather was 89 years old when he died, and lived here then, and they had a hundred acres up west here. They sold that when he died. And up there in the corner piece Shutesbury and Buffam Road there, belonged to us, my grandfather. A lot of this land that Dr. Weeks bought out here, was ours originally, you know. (Is he building a new house up here?) He's got a beautiful house out there. (Where, up that road?) It's almost right back of the house here. You go up the Robinson Road, go out there. (How do you get in to his property?) By the quarry and go right back. That's the Robinson Road. His is the only house on there, 'cause Pages live up higher. (On Boyden Road.)

BJ: He's not moved in to that, has he? (I don't know, I don't think so.) I only heard the other day that he had built it, I'm kind of slow. (They been working at it all winter.) I knew they had property out here (He only bought 87 acres.) Only 87 acres? What do you think he's going to do with 87 acres? (Build more houses, he says.) Oh no, really? (Gonna take them out the Boyden Road. When they go out, they're going out the Boyden Road.) I don't know that area up there very well. I guess I'd better take a little look see and see what's going on up there. (I don't think there's much going on yet. It's right here now. I think he's going to live out here.) When I leave I'll have to kind of amble up there and see. (He's built the road up about three feet. Of course, it's a discontinued road, so I owned half the middle of the road and he owns the other half, 'cause I have land out back here too.) I wondered how that works, as far as ownership of that road.

MW: So he came to me and asked me if I minded if he built the road up three feet. And I said, "No I don't care." When you get to his house, then the road is all washed

out like, you can't get through there unless you walk. You could ride horseback. They used to go out back, through that way and drive with their horses, but I don't know whether they do now or not. Last five years I haven't done much of nothing.

BJ: You said you didn't get too neighborly. Were you involved in anything in the town, any organization? (No.) Or your husband either? (No.) Did you go to Town Meeting? (Yes.) Do you remember any particular issues that went on in Town Meeting? (Not particularly, they used to have nice town meetings, but nothing stands out in my mind.) You know, it's these big issues at the time everybody's arguing about and then nobody can remember later what they were about. (When they wanted to build the school down here too, there was quite an argument about it, you know. They burned down the other school and then built this new school. Then they got the town shed, where the fire place is—they had quite an argument about that. As I remember, they paid \$10,000 for that. Now today you couldn't get nothing for that.) Now they want some more space, I think.

MW: Fire Co., I don't know. But I don't think they'll get it right now. Now's not the time to ask for things. They built that tool shed way up back of the Rhodes School there, so they got that for trucks and things I guess.

BJ: You said you lived up here and there weren't too many people around. Were there any town characters that you remember? Did anybody live just kind of out in shanties or anything like that around here?

MW: No, not here. Well, Bill Patrell lived up there where Berglund bought their place. But he went into the service in '42 I guess. I don't know whether he got hurt or something. He never went out of the state. I guess he got hurt down Westover Field. Then they discharged him 'cause he was too old for the service. They should never have taken him in the first place. He was, you know, in his late forties. And they lived in a shanty. (You meant he lived there before he went in the service?) Um. (Or after he got out?) Before. (Just himself?) Yeah, he was a bachelor. (Now, was he related to the Patricks that owned this place down here by Quarry Road?) (Different—they're Patricks down here, this I Patrell. (Oh Patrell. And what did you say his first name was?) William. (Oh, I used to know him at the Amherst Nursing Home.) Yeah, he was there quite awhile. (I know he's buried down here in the cemetery.) No, Bill isn't buried here, is he? (I thought so.) Charlie is, Charlie and Nellie—they lived on the Boyden Road there where Jennings live. (No, I think I've seen that, but I don't know. So he used to live up here by himself? Just out in the woods?) Yes, he was half brother to Charlie Sears—his name was Sears. They called him ---- because some family of ---- brought him up, but his name was Sears. (Oh this man that you said lived there where Jennings is.) Yeah. He and his wife. They're buried down in the Valley here, right next to the west wall. The old, old part of the cemetery. (I'm pretty sure Bill Patrell is buried there because I've seen some like flags, like military kind of designation, in the newer part—it's a newer grave, a small one I

think.) Isn't that funny? I should know, but....(So how did he happen to be up here just by himself. Had his family been here in Pelham?) His father lived there, in the shanty. (That word is used a lot. I know, I've heard it referred to other people in town. A shanty, what was a shanty?) Just a one room construction. (One room construction, tar paper or something like that?) Yeah, you could go in, you could hardly stand up.

BJ: Was that not so uncommon then that there were people, sort of around in town, maybe living like that?

MW: I don't know, I don't know. I never, I don't know. I don't know much about that end of town, about that. They were going to get trailers, then they made it so they couldn't get trailers any more. You know, they started putting trailers here and there. (So, in a way, the trailer took the place of the one room shanty?) Yes. (Like Mr. Pratt down here?) Yes. (He's got a trailer.) That belongs to Whitcomb in Amherst. Pratt don't own that, he just—they used to try and get rid of him too. (Oh, don't like trailers around, huh?) Well....

BJ: While we were turning this tape over, you mentioned that you had a tape recorder and that you used it to learn your secret codes. My mother was in Rebecca, and I never could get any secrets out of here. So your Rebecca, and Grange, and what else? (That's enough.) Okay, I just wanted to make sure. Well, you mentioned you hadn't been in any organizations in Pelham, but you do belong to things in Amherst. Do you do other things in Amherst—more than in Pelham, or? (More or less.) Why is that? (Well...) *She looks at me and she's not going to tell me on the tape.*

MW: Well, I used to go to the Second Church. My husband and I went there and then they sold the church to the Jewish people so I haven't affiliated with any church.

BJ: But you maintained an Amherst connection.

MW: Oh yes, I went to the center a lot too. Took a lot of courses in cooking and braiding and whatever.

BJ: What about Shutesbury? Over the years you were actually much closer to Shutesbury in some ways. Did you go up there for anything much?

MW: No, later my husband delivered the Gazette around and I used to ride with him some. We used to go to the store up there some to get things.

BJ: You know, you looked at me. I don't know how to ask you these questions. Was it hard to move into Pelham? Did you feel like it was hard to become part of this town?

MW: Well, I came here because I had no place else to live. (You didn't choose to be out here in the hills, in other words?) Well, I was always brought up in town. (Okay.) Kind of hard to begin with. I liked it, because it was my grandfather's

farm and it was part of us. I can't say my husband always enjoyed living out here, but...

BJ: Well, I wanted to talk to you. We started talking about that some at first and I'd like to go back to that some, because I think that now.... Okay, I live out on Valley Road, that's a long way out, but you zip in and out. And I want to think about what it was like more. You were out here, you were without a car, you were without electricity. I assume you were without a phone too and water and everything just took a lot longer to do. And you were isolated more. What kinds of thing did you do with your daughter or your son too. What kind of past-times?

MW: Well, my son liked to work around the farm, he liked to do this and that. (When he was little, say, when they were really little, do you remember that?) Yes, they used to play. Life wasn't so easy, we had to drill water, we had this and that to do. They never went too much to things, even the school, even after, in the evening, you know.

BJ: That's what I'm trying to kind of see, what it was like to be a family that was off, kind of by yourselves, and how you spent your time. (Well, the kids never seemed to mind it.) No, I'm not saying they did, or should. I just wondered what you did. I've talked to other people about that, and oh, you know, they talked about what they did for recreation, say, you know.

MW: Well, they didn't feel they had to. We used to go down to Page's, back of Burt Page's. They used to have a ball field there and the boys used to play ball. (You mentioned before you had your electricity you used to listen to the radio, only your battery wouldn't work.) Yeah, that was great. Oh, I'm telling ya.

BJ: Did you have much free time, or was it mostly just work?

MW: Well, I don't know. We were busy. We had to cut the wood. (Yes, okay.) [edited section] (Right. Exactly. I've asked that of several people and it seems to me like people had to work hard to make ends meet. After all, it was a depression and then it was still difficult after that. You didn't have time to sit and watch... if you would have had a television.) They didn't have television until my Billy was about five years old, before they really come in. He would have been forty this year. Well, didn't have radios too much, without electric ones, you know. Programs are different than they are today. By far. (In what ways?) Better or worse, I don't know. All they got now is sex. (Your soap operas are full of that, right?) Oh yes. (Anything is.) A lot of things, yes. I don't think that's good for the kids. I don't know. (It's different.) Maybe it is, I don't know. (It's going to be hard to know—we won't know for awhile, you know, really. It's so open, sex is so open now, really. (That's right.) I think that young people lose some of the values of some things. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm too old fashioned.

BJ: It sounds like you're still thinking about things like that though, being old fashioned or not being old fashioned, which I think makes you, must feel a little

bit younger. I mean, a lot of people your age wouldn't have any question whether they were right or wrong, you know. You sound like....

MW: Well, I have three teenagers.

BJ: Kept you younger, see?

MW: I guess so. I have to get up in the morning to keep ahead of 'em.

BJ: You said you were seventy some when you took your grandchildren.

MW: Yes, I'm seventy-even now, so I got the kids in 'seventy.. They came to me in about '76.

BJ: So you had like three teenagers right off the bat.

MW: Right off the bat.

BJ: Now Mrs. Partridge said that she had had one of your granddaughters, but that isn't the same batch, that's another.

MW: That's my daughter's daughter. I had her for about ten years. I took care of her. She's my joy. (You're proud of her, right?) Yes. She's married now. She has a set of twins and she has a new baby this February. So now I'm a great grandmother seven times. Going to be another one in this month sometime. My son's second wife, his wife's gonna have a baby. They're out in California, in the air base. Captain in the air force. (Have you ever visited him out there?) Nope.

BJ: Have you ever traveled much at all?

MW: No. I go here into Amherst. I've been up in Vermont and I've been different places, but not out of the state very far.

BJ: You like to stay close to home even though you don't like being out here.

MW: Well, I don't really enjoy going into Amherst and staying too long. I was brought up there. I don't know how, they told me if I came here, that if I lived here five years, they'd have me over the Northampton State Hospital.

BJ: Oh really? So they, your parents—was it your parents or your friends or who—though you wouldn't be happy out here by yourself?

MW: Everybody. (Did you feel like you were a pioneer?) No, I used to come out and help my grandfather. My grandfather was an old man. And we used to come out and help him quite a little, Sundays. And 'course I was a tomboy, he'd take me with him. (Oh, what kinds of things would you do, how would you help?) Oh we planted potatoes out here and Grandpa, Bill, my husband, my father come out and cut wood for my grandfather so he had enough wood. He was old, he couldn't cut

- the wood then. Ah, a day out in the country did us good. We used to ride out in the streetcar, and walk up from the streetcar up here. (I was going to ask about that. Was Orient Springs still active as of ...) It was active then. (Yes, did you ever stop in there on Sunday?) Oh yes, I used to go there lots. (What was that like?) Oh, it was just a place to take a picnic and go to the pool to swim, paddle around. Used to take the streetcar—as kids, we'd take the streetcar and go out there and have a good time. (Oh, just even from Amherst, and go back in town again?) Yes.
- BJ:** You mentioned being a tomboy. Was that unusual for a girl? (I don't know. IO often wondered if I was a girl.) Oh really?
- MW:** When we lived in town we played ball in the back yard, and all the kids congregated, and we had a good time. Now almost all the people are gone.
- BJ:** So you didn't feel then that you were having to be a little lady or something like that?
- MW:** No, I must have been an awful rough kid.
- BJ:** Why do you say that? (Oh, I don't know.) Have you heard stories about yourself?
- MW:** Vertine Bement Shumway—she used to tell me to go home and put my shoes on. And wash my face. I can remember that. I guess I enjoyed myself.
- BJ:** When you refer to that, you look happy. You look like you get a kick out of remembering that part of your childhood.
- MW:** Oh yes, we used to have fun.
- BJ:** The reason I asked about that is that sometimes there is a sense that girls had to be a certain way back then, and yet I've talked to—say Sally Shepard—and she talked to me about being quite an outdoors girl. I get the impression you could be what you wanted to be like then, too. I was kind of a tomboy growing up, and I think it's partly who you're around. (Yes, I think so too.) I was in a little town with only boys as neighbors, while my daughter is not that way at all. She doesn't have many neighbors of any kind.
- MW:** Some children have to have a lot of children to play with. Some children play by themselves pretty good.
- BJ:** Back to what you said about debating whether there was too much sex on television and wondering about it. Do you feel as if you're younger in some ways because you had those teenagers still to think about than if you wouldn't have?
- MW:** I think the kids kind of kept me young. You had to keep one foot ahead of them. I probably never would have done this if it hadn't have been for my son. I

thought that was the least I could do—to help bring up his children. To see them brought up right. Or course, I may not have been right, but at least they got a start. They know right from wrong because I just made them understand it. (You sound like someone who is pretty definite about things that you feel.) Oh yes, I had to be. When you're living, you have to know right from wrong. You have to know what you're doing. I was brought up in church. It was like going to school. We had to go every Sunday. I guess I learned right from wrong.

BJ: And when you came out here, you continued to go to the Second Congregational Church?

MW: I didn't go right away. We had no transportation and my clothes were kind of ragged. I didn't have everything I needed. Old Nellie up here, she said, "Don't ever apologize for what you got. Don't *ever* apologize!" So I never forgot that.. When she and Charlie lived up there, they had just a henhouse they lived in for awhile. That house where the cellar hole was—that white house—it burned many years ago. When they bought it, that's all there was. They had this henhouse to live in. Where Jennings' house is now. On Boyden Road. Part of that house is built from the old castle down here. The castle was the corner house. There's a cellar hole just this side of Hosmers. (The next house down.) They took the stone out of that cellar hole, and put it on the side of that house. (Oh, that's why that house is stone.) It was all spit and put on there.

BJ: This castle you're referring to. I think Mr. Burrows mentioned digging around in that once and finding something down there. Jennings' house is part of that?

MW: The frame. The timbers in the house are from that. Most of them.

BJ: You were swaying that this Nellie said to you not to worry about things—that whatever you are, you are. When you came out here, had you been living in better circumstances in Amherst and then when you came out here, it was harder?

MW: We had a good tenement down there. We lived right in back of Amherst Cleaners and Dryers. Right next to the Masonic Temple there. I had that upstairs tenement there.

BJ: And when you came out here it was hard because your husband didn't have a job. Things were tougher? (Oh yes.) What had he been doing in town?

MW: I worked at the fraternity house, the Deke house. I did vacuuming, dusting, making beds. Mr. Bowles was the janitor then and he was quite old. So they hired me to come in and help him. Mr. Bowles died and they got a young janitor so I didn't have that work. My husband took care of the little kids, made the meals. (So, he wasn't working then?) No.

BJ: What had he done initially?

MW: He lived on the apple farm in South Amherst. Then when he left there, he went to work for American Bosch in Chicopee. Then he worked for the Fisk Rubber Co, but he went in late and when they laid them off, they laid off the ones that came in last. He worked on making radios down at Bosch. Did soldering work and all that fussy work. I don't know. He was quite clever with his hands. He didn't care that much for farming.

BJ: Did he think he was going to farm when he came out here?

MW: No, not really.

BJ: When you came out here you eventually went to the church in town. Did you ever consider going to the church here in town?

MW: We did go to the church over there some times. Gladys Seitz, when we were growing up, lived down by the store and she and I were very good friends. We used to go up here to the church quite a lot. I know a lot of people up here. I have a lot of friends. I'm very lucky that way now because I don't have a car. [edited section]

BJ: I wanted to ask you something when you were talking about being up here. Did you have to do a lot of health remedies yourself? Were you sort of your own doctor?

MW: No, we ever needed a doctor that much.

BJ: What were the remedies if your kids caught cold?

MW: I'd take them to Dr. Durgin or Dr. Clapp. Dr. Durgin delivered my first two children in Cooley Dickinson. (You had both your children when you moved out here and it was your younger one that was born while you were out here. That's where I got confused.) He's the father of these kids I raised. We made it anyway!

BJ: Somebody else I talked to said, "Well, we never did any big things. We never did any bad things. We're just sort of regular people."

MW: We enjoyed ourselves together. We read and I sewed or whatever.

BJ: I was going to ask you about reading. Are those life magazines over there?

MW: No [edited section]

BJ: Where is he going to live?

MW: He's going to build a house up the road. I gave him a piece of land. Here are the magazines. Hoard's Dairyman. I can't throw these away! He wants to build a

house up the road so I gave him three acres of land. I think it was in the paper Saturday.

BJ: Is he going to start building right away?

MW: He wants to. [edited section]

BJ: Do you think it's getting tough again like it was during the Depression? How do you see it now as compared to when you started out?

MW: Well, I don't know. We never wanted as much as the kids do today. The kids today want as much as we had all our lives when they get married.

BJ: It bothers me a little bit to hear people talk about how hard times are. It puzzles me. I hear people talking about things like that, and then I know that they have more gadgets to put on their TV and this and that. I think...

MW: They never had those in our days.

BJ: I thin, what is important? But I think every generation ahs thought their children could have more than they had. Now they're having to back up some in heir expectations.

MW: I don't know how the kids are going to like that. My son graduated from high school and went to the service and came back. He went to college four years and then he went to Georgetown University four years and became a dentist. Now he has had to give it up because he has a bad heart. He moved to California. [edited section]

[Mrs. Wilson continues to talk about family members for some time and that is not transcribed.]

BJ: When I was asking you about remedies you used for your children, you said you took them to the doctor. What were popular things to do? I had people talk to me about various things: skunk oil, etc.

MW: [edited section]

BJ: You didn't have any home remedies? (No.) Did you do a lot of canning and things like that?

MW: Yes, I did quite a little. Things I had in the garden I canned.

BJ: Were you in town to shop or did trucks come by?

MW: We went to town. When we got there.

BJ: What did you do when you didn't get there?

MW: We managed somehow.

BJ: What did you eat usually? Did you have plenty or were you stretching it there for awhile? (We had plenty.) Did you butcher? (No, not those days. We got a freezer one of the first times they come around. No freezer, I've had for 35 years.) What about back before electricity? (No, no.) Is it hard to remember that far back?

MW: I don't remember how we did keep our meat. Maybe we didn't have that many meats. We didn't have that much money. Of course, meat wasn't as high as it is now.

BJ: You know what I'm wondering. A lot of people your age haven't had a lot of things happening in recent years so it seems as if they remember things back. You've had a lot to keep you right up to date. Like now you're planning for your grandson's wedding and all this sort of thing which keeps you right up to date.

MW: [edited section]

BJ: It keeps you right up to date and you don't have as much time to reminisce so much. You're involved with everything day to day.

MW: She was married at the Women's Club last year. Lotie married Ruth Weaver's son up here. They live up in the trailer in Shutesbury. (Related to the Weavers here?) Yes, Avis' sister. Two sisters married two brothers. Three, I guess. Three Burrows girls married three Weaver boys. Emma married Lester, Ruth married Walter, and Avis married Aubie. (Who got married first?) Avis, I think. (So she started the whole thing!) You see, they couldn't travel so far in those days!

BJ: Where did you meet your husband?

MW: I went to school with him in Amherst when I was a kid. Junior High. (Played baseball with him?) No, I never thought of it in those days. I never thought of him as a boyfriend then.

BJ: Is he somehow related to the Willson in town that spells his name with 2 Ls?

MW: No, he's related to the wife. She's my husband's sister.

INFORMATION SHEET

Marie Yegian

Born: December 12, 1901

Place of Birth: Carlisle, Iowa

Mother's Name: Clara Krysher Keeling

Father's Name: Charles F. Keeling

Spouse's Name: Hrant M. Yegian

Date of Interview: October 21, 1980

BJ = Barbara Jenkins, Interviewer

MY = Marie Yegian

Original transcription by Grace Dane

- BJ:** Will you tell me now how you happened to come to Pelham? I want to figure how you got from Iowa out here, like me.
- MY:** Well, at the time I was not married and my husband came here because his brother, who was at the University, was very ill with tuberculosis and he came here to be with him. He was able to get work at the university. At first he wasn't on the staff at all. He just had a job and worked himself in in the agronomy department because that was his field. He had worked for Henry Wallace Farm and that was the way I happened to know him.
- BJ:** That was what I was going to say. How did you meet him? You met him back in Iowa then.
- MY:** Yes, he was working at the Henry Wallace Farm which was very close to a big consolidated school where I was teaching. He was living with some friends of ours—of mine—and they had a bridge party. I was invited to come to the bridge party. Well, I never knew how he remembered me particularly except I'm a very poor bridge player and he's a very good bridge player. So we dated some—maybe a year or so—and then he came here, as I say, because his brother was ill. He had no intentions of coming here at the time. Then he did get onto the staff at the university and I came here and we were married in 1936. I had been teaching out there all the time. We lived here in Pelham to begin with. There were a couple of older ladies who lived up where the Nichols live now. It's up on the flat up beyond where Alice Campbell lives. It's a brown shingled house now and doesn't look at all like these two old ladies had it. And we lived therewith them for awhile until we got a little money ahead. Then we went downtown and rented the apartment that is over the theater. And we lived there for a couple of years until we came out here to Pelham. We've lived here in this house ever since—since 1938-39.
- BJ:** Now, you said that you started out here in Pelham. Did you just happen to hear about a house to live in?
- MY:** We were looking for a house to rent. By the time we came out, we had a bay a year old and we wanted to get him—you see, w3 were living upstairs in the apartment—and we wanted to get him out on the grass.
- BJ:** Before you moved out where those old ladies lived, where were you living? You weren't living anyplace, right? So how did you happen to come clear out here to where those older ladies were?
- MY:** My husband was rooming with them while he was at the university.
- BJ:** Okay, so then you went in town and you wanted to get back out where there wads grass, you said. And Pelham had grass!

MY: And this house was for rent and that was what we had to have at that time—a rented house, not one we could buy—and so we rented here for several years. I think we paid \$25 a month for rent.

BJ: Of course, your salaries weren't very high then either. That always has to be pointed out. You must have liked Pelham then when you lived out here with those old ladies and that's why you wanted to come back.

MY: Yes. I've forgotten how we knew that this house was for rent, but probably we saw it in the paper.

BJ: And then you bought it after.

MY: Yes, after a certain period of time.

BJ: What was Harkness Road like then? How many houses were there?

MY: The house across from the Kimballs was not there. That little house was built later. But the Kimball house, coming up this way, this was the last house until you got to the farm up here except for the two little cottages that are back of the Mitchells. It's the next lot, the next property, the second house up. I mean there's a house back in the woods that you don't see. Then the next house that you see as you go up the road is the Mitchell property. And back behind there were two little cottages and the Mitchells were in New York during the summer and they had a school for the blind. They ran a school for the blind and then in the summer during vacation time they would come and live back in those little cottages—they were just little summer cottages.

BJ: Somebody at one time—and I can't tell you if this has any relevance to your time period or not—was there ever, like not a school, but a place where children who might have been retarded or something?

MY: That's right. That was the house next door, but I don't know too much about it.

BJ: That was before your time.

MY: Yes, the Aldriches were living here when we came here.

BJ: Well, it just struck me when you talked about blind children.

MY: I've heard that this house was done over, I guess, when the Aldriches bought it.

BJ: It had been sort of like a residence for children?

MY: I think so. I really don't know.

BJ: What about—was this house across the street a maternity hospital still when you were around at all or was that before that?

MY: When we came, Mrs. Hamilton was keeping ladies.

BJ: She'd gone from maternity house to old ladies!

MY: Yes, no babies.

BJ: So there were like about five or six houses right here.

MY: Well, we're the sixth house. Well, of course, the Kimball house—Harriet Kimball—the second house up. That was Mr. Kimball (which was Evelyn's brother) lived there. Evelyn's brother built that house.

BJ: The house on the corner you're not referring to.

MY: No, I'm talking about the next one. That house was not there. So I had forgotten about that. So there were these two houses that were not there. Then no more houses after you leave our house except for those two little cottages until you got up to the farm—Foote's Dairy Farm.

BJ: And that was like at the corner of South Valley there—is that where you mean when you say the dairy farm?

MY: Yes, where South Valley Road comes down. That big house where there's a big farm. You see, this road was hardtop right through here until you got to the Foote farm and then it was dirt road. So we didn't have any traffic much, you see. So when the children were small, I could just let them, you know... I didn't particularly worry about them. These days you'd have to put up a fence there or something because of so many cars.

BJ: And didn't the bridge down here get very narrow or something? Maybe that was before that time, too. Evelyn Kimball talked about the problem of being a very narrow bridge down there or something.

MY: I wonder where that bridge would be that she referred to.

BJ: In front of that farm. Isn't there a little bridge down there? Maybe there used to be. It's probably in my mind or something because she talked about it.

MY: Well, there probably was.

BJ: So, in other words, it was pretty quiet out here.

MY: Oh yes.

BJ: And, of course, cars were not zipping around like they were... Did you have a car?

MY: Oh yes.

BJ: Or did you use a trolley? Was the trolley still going when you came?

MY: No.

BJ: '38. I have to get the date on that.

MY: My husband had a car.

BJ: He had a car. Did you drive too?

MY: Yes, of course. I liked to drive in Iowa, you know, where you didn't have to have even a license to drive there. You just drove when you got ready when your father would let you.

BJ: So you had a child when you moved out here now.

MY: When we moved out here, we had one.

BJ: And you have two all together?

MY: We had two.

BJ: So you were home pretty much then during the day?

MY: Yes. I didn't start teaching until Judith, which is the second one, was ready for kindergarten. Then I taught down at the Little Red School House on the Amherst College campus. I taught there a good any years.

BJ: Was it unusual for married women to be teaching then?

MY: When I was on the School Committee, Dr. Dudley was the Superintendent and he did not like to hire a married teacher. He said we just get them started to teach, we just get school started, and then they get pregnant. And so, when I was first on the School Committee we stayed away from married teachers as much as we could. But I think for the second or third year that I was on I remember Mrs. Van...well, of course Miss Collis, you know, was the teacher here for a long time. Then there was a Mrs. Thornton that taught here. Of course, she was married, but she was an older lady. I don't know when she started teaching out here. But she taught all the time I was on the School Committee. Mrs. Thornton was the teacher.

BJ: Maybe it was more before that time when they didn't want to have married teachers. I just heard about that a little bit.

MY: Well yes, this was very true.

BJ: But you were hired down here because that was a private school?

- MY:** Well, that was a private school and that was a little different. Of course, that was later because by that time I had a daughter that was five years old.
- BJ:** And how much later then was it that you were on the School Committee out here?
- MY:** Oh well, I was on the School Committee... I tried to find out. I got out the old town reports and the first town report I have was in 1949. And I was on the School Committee then and I have six reports in which I was on the School Committee. And, as I remember, I finished up someone's term so I think I was appointed to begin with and was elected two times after that. I must have served about eight years on the School Committee
- BJ:** So that was about ten years after you moved out here then, right? If you said you moved out here in 1938-1939?
- MY:** Yes.
- BJ:** Were you still teaching yourself at the time you were on the School Committee?
- MY:** Oh yes, I taught until 1967.
- BJ:** That is quite a few years!
- MY:** Oh yes, I was through with the School Committee and I was still teaching.
- BJ:** I'd like to go back and talk about that business of your teaching when your children were younger because, even though you said it was a private school and they took married teachers, I think it was still more unusual for women to have a career and a family. Wasn't it?
- MY:** I suppose it was—certainly much more than now or even a few years ago. How did we manage?
- BJ:** I didn't say that, but how did you manage?
- MY:** Well, by the time I started teaching, the older child was, of course, in public school. First I went in just as a sub teacher. And then that teacher was in hospital and I subbed for her while she was in the hospital and she wasn't able—she never came back to school. So then I went in just a regular teacher and continued that. That was a half-day, you see, and that was the year Judith was old enough to go with me. She went to kindergarten down to the Little Red School House.
- BJ:** That's right, they didn't have kindergartens—I have to remember.
- MY:** Yes, and then the lady that was the head of the school stopped and then I went in as head of the school. And part of the time that was full-day teaching, but by that time Judith was old enough to look after herself. These days I'd probably have felt a little differently about it. I remember leaving her home by herself when she

was, well not really, when she was in grade school. My husband managed his vacations so that her could take his vacation when he wanted to. At that time, he was not teaching. He was doing research and field work and that kind of thing so he could take his vacation more or less when he wanted to. I mean he had to keep track of it. And so if one of the children were ill, he'd stay home in the morning until I'd come home and then I would take over and he would go in the afternoon.

BJ: So you worked mostly half-days then?

MY: Yes. Then when the children got older, Judith was in—by the time she was in Junior High, the kids were on half-day sessions. Junior High and Senior High were on half-day sessions.

BJ: Why was that?

MY: That was before the new school was built. So Judith would be home in the morning. Charles would go off to school and then she would go off. She would have to go before I would get home because the bus would pick her up. And I used to leave her there alone. Now these days I would hesitate, I guess, to leave her alone, to leave a girl alone in the house.

BJ: Well, you sounded like you had it worked out pretty well.

MY: Yes.

BJ: I think the thing that I think about as I run in and throw in some wash or something is that I can remember my mother doing that as a whole day's job. So I think it would have been harder for someone like yourself to both do these things outside the home and in the home. When did you do all those kinds of things? When you were home in the afternoon?

MY: Yes.

BJ: That was enough? It seems like things have been cut down do much in terms of the work you have to do—washing, cooking, everything. But you enjoyed teaching and I guess you really wanted to do it.

MY: Very much. Of course, it was a lovely spot to teach—the Little Red School House. The building was all furnished by Amherst College, lights and heat, so you see teachers could get a little more salary and we could have a lot more money for equipment and supplies and things like that so it was a great place to teach.

BJ: Then you say you got appointed to the School Committee out here. Somebody couldn't finish a term or something?

MY: Yes, I followed Sally Shepard. And I don't know why she stopped. It seems to me I almost took her place. But that I wouldn't be sure about so it ought not to go in.

BJ: You know, it's funny. She didn't talk to me about that. I realized afterwards, somebody said something about that, and I thought, "I don't have that down there." She talked about a lot of things but I don't think that was in.

MY: I don't know how long she was on the School Committee. She lived in the second house down there. She lived where the Peppards live now. That was her home and so I have no idea. I just know she was on the School Committee when we moved out here.

BJ: Well, would her husband have died or something?

MY: It might have been.

BJ: She talked about going to Hartford to work for some woman or something.

MY: Yes, so I think she might have left and I finished up her term.

BJ: Maybe something like that. Can you remember what some of the issues were before the School Committee at that time? Anything that comes to mind?

MY: Well, I got this...

BJ: Okay. Some of the things that seem so big an important you have to go back and look at the Town Report to see what was so big and important.

MY: The first thing that I have is 1946. At that time at the City School down here *all* the grades were down here. One, two, three, four, five, six. And at the top of the hill was one, two three, so the kids that lived up there (and I don't remember where the division line was), the first, second, and third graders went to the Rhodes School. And we also had a first, second, and third grade down here, as well as the fourth, fifth, and sixth. So there was only one teacher up there and two down here. That's when Miss Collis has the fourth, fifth, and sixth. I remember right away when I was on the School Committee I thought this seems—why have two teachers teaching maybe 4 or 5 first graders up there and 5 or 6 down here? Why can't they all be together? And they said, "Oh no, because that would make the children ride on the bus." And they'd have to ride so far. Of course, that meant nothing to me because I'd been teaching in consolidated schools in Iowa, you know, where kids would ride fifteen miles or more. So that didn't mean a thing to me. So the 2nd year that I was on the School Committee in 1947 they divided. They put all the first and second graders down here, all the third and fourth graders in to town went to the top of the hill, and all the fifth and sixth graders were down here.

BJ: Did you have something to do with that then?

MY: I don't know how much I had to do with it.

BJ: Did you keep kind of trying to push for that?

MY: Yes, I tried to argue that riding on the bus wasn't any great thing. I could see, I suppose, parents who always had their children close to home might feel that way at the beginning. The little ones, you see, they felt, I suppose, that if they got sick they could get there faster.

BJ: They're still doing that. You know, the idea of neighborhood schools. And I think like you did,, where I was from you had to go from all of the corners. You didn't go to the school down the road. So you changed—that was something you changed.

MY: Yes, that was a change. It was interesting to know how many children there were in school then. There were 72 in the public schools at that tie. And the appropriation was \$17,000. That was the school appropriation. Now, you have to remember, of course, that there were three teachers. Every teacher taught everything. And I did notice in the Town Report that one of the things we were talking about was the superintendent was urging us to change from heating the Rhodes School from coal to oil

BJ: Because coal was too expensive then?

MY: No, it was because of keeping the fires going and the janitor—I think we had just one janitor that went back and forth and it meant that if you had to keep poking a coal stove, you see, it was harder. In 1947-48 the appropriation went up to \$19,000.

BJ: Do you remember the Town Meeting? At that time, was there a lot of argument about spending for schools?

MY: No, I don't remember that there was. And the School Committee in those days didn't have anything to do compared to what School Committees have these days. It was a very easy job. The superintendent would bring out suggestions and we sort of looked to him to tell us what should be done.

MY: Dr. Dudley was the superintendent for the first three—he was superintendent until 1949. And then we had a man by the name of Carroll Johnson came on as superintendent. And he was our superintendent for three years following Dr. Dudley. Dr. Dudley essentially retired—I mean, he wasn't let out or anything. Ant it was the end 1949-50. You remember there was a lot of planting around the school up there? Harry Adriance had taken landscaping at the University and he offered his services if the School Committee could find enough money to buy planting; he would help us place it and plant it. As I remember, I think he had much to do with putting it in. So that was in 1950 that that planting went in up there.

- BJ:** And that was with the old school building, right, not the new one?
- MY:** Now, this was at the Rhodes School. Of course, that was the better of the two schools. It was a better building than this one down here. It was a newer building, much newer building. And then this was another interesting thing I found. The average teacher's salary in Massachusetts at that time was \$3,400 and at Pelham at that time the average teacher was getting \$2,100.
- BJ:** How would you like to explain that one?
- MY:** I remember Mr. Carroll Johnson said, "If you expect to have good teachers and keep your teachers, your salaries are going to have to be increased." And I don't recall whether it was when I was on the School Committee or not when... Now, you know, the teachers are paid at Pelham the same as they are downtown, so sometime along the line this was changed from Pelham having one salary and the Amherst teachers having another because we used to lose some teachers from Pelham to Amherst.
- BJ:** I suppose there was this like Miss Collis had taught here forever and people thought, well, you can just keep these people teaching forever. You don't have to spend the money! Did you have any battles to get money for any expenditures for the school? Did you try things that didn't work, say, that you remember?
- MY:** I don't remember anything. I don't offhand think of anything that we had any to-dos about anything I just know that always try to keep the expense down—you know?
- BJ:** Things haven't changed a bit, have they?
- MY:** We did get an art teacher somewhere along the line here, and she only stayed a year and a half and then she moved—her husband was moving. That was a married teacher too, by the way. So she left and then there was no art teacher and I didn't find anything that stated...
- BJ:** So you were on the board when they hired that art teacher? Do you remember, was there an issue about hiring a teacher to do that special thing instead of having classroom teachers do it?
- MY:** No, I think people were quite ready by that time to have someone special in and when she left I remember people were a little upset to think that we had art. Although, as I think of it, she only had one day a week and they said if she'd accomplished this much in one day a week we certainly ought to try and continue looking for an art teacher. And I presume we did I didn't find it in the Town Report, but I think we must have found an art teacher after a year or two.
- BJ:** Anything else there?
- MY:** I was on the board until 1952. that's when I went off the board.

- BJ:** Did you stop or did you run for election and not....
- MY:** No, I decided after three terms that was enough. The year that I stopped was the year that Mr. Johnson left and I remember going with some of the board members downtown looking for a new superintendent. And that year we got a Mr. Goodrich—Ralph Goodrich came in. But I didn't work under him. I wasn't on the School Committee with him because that was the year I was off.
- BJ:** You said Sally Shepard had been on before you and then you... Were there any other women? I understood Sally, wasn't she the first woman on the School Committee?
- MY:** I don't know that she was, but I expect maybe she was.
- BJ:** She didn't mention it, but somebody along the way said that, I think. I don't know, but how about other boards? Was it unusual to have... I mean, did you feel unusual to be on the School Committee at that time?
- MY:** No, at the time I belonged to the School Committee, Miss Collis' sister, Grace Kimball, was one of the Selectman. And had been. I don't recall any other woman being on.
- BJ:** Well, Grace Kimball was Evelyn's mother?
- MY:** Yes.
- BJ:** Well, I think Evelyn told me her mother was the first selectman and that one of the other selectpersons wouldn't come and sit on the board all the time she was on, or something. So I think it wasn't so common.
- MY:** I don't remember. Well, could have been library—like Library Commission probably had a woman.
- BJ:** But you didn't find any problem with that particularly?
- MY:** No.
- BJ:** Now, you were part of the PTA?
- MY:** That would have been up here in Pelham?
- BJ:** Yes. After or before School Committee?
- MY:** I don't recall. It would have been when our children were in school. And then I remember down at the Junior High I had something to do with the Program Committee at the Junior High/Senior High. The Junior High/Senior High, I think, was a meeting together. I remember Eugene Wilson was the chairman of the

- Program Committee and I was on the committee with him. I don't think I ever was much help.
- BJ:** I'd like to go back a little bit. You said when you moved in here and it wasn't too long before you were involved in things in town. What was it like to be a "newcomer" in Pelham at that time?
- MY:** Well, for while, I think people sort of resented it. The people who had always lived here sort of resented having... They always spoke of you as the college people coming in, trying to take over the town. But I never had any feeling that people were unkind or unfriendly.
- BJ:** Were the people on this street all natives or were there a variety? Do you remember?
- MY:** I guess they would be called natives. The Shepards had always lived here and the Aldriches, of course, were very much involved in the town. The Footes...
- BJ:** There was a dairy farm down there?
- MY:** Yes, they had a big dairy. We used to buy our milk there.
- BJ:** Nothing else beyond them before you got to Belchertown?
- MY:** Well, you get almost to the corner and then Ralph Trachey's house which is right at the corner just as you turn, that house would have been there.
- BJ:** Was that a farm too?
- MY:** A chicken farm. He had chickens. But, of course, all those other little houses are all new. The Lumley house was new. Mr. Lumley had much to do with building these other houses that are on this side.
- BJ:** When you say he had to do with it, what...
- MY:** Well, he must have owned the land, if I remember correctly, and built houses and sold them. He and Mr. George Taylor. They were in sort of cahoots on that. But that was all after we came here. Even the Lumley house was, of course, built after we came.
- BJ:** That came out of the Quabbin?
- MY:** Yes.
- BJ:** When you came here, what was the situation with Quabbin at that time? Do you remember very much about it or anything?
- MY:** No. I don't remember ever going over that direction until after the Quabbin was practically completed. And then whenever my family would come from the West,

we usually would take them around to all these different places. The Quabbin was one place we always would go.

BJ: But when you came to town there wasn't talk about the fact that it was being built or was it too bad they had to get rid of those towns or anything like that you remember?

MY: I suppose that all maybe happened before because the people who lived in the house over here—the Browns—Mrs. Brown's family lived there and they had moved out and come up here and then settled here, I guess, several years maybe before we came. So that part of it was...

BJ: But it was being sort of finished up when you came?

MY: It must have been, yes. Because I don't know how long the Browns lived here, but I think several years. Not the Browns, it would be the Hamiltons. Mrs. Hamilton was Mrs. Brown's mother.

BJ: Now you were talking about that it wasn't, you didn't feel.... There was some problem in getting to be in the town but nothing you suffered personally from.

MY: No, people were all very friendly.

BJ: Do you remember any issues when you were in the PTA? What did they try to help? You're grinning, like there was something.

MY: Noo., You'd think that I could remember, wouldn't you?

BJ: No, I think that that's important, you know. I think we get caught up in "Oh, these things are so important." And you can't remember those great big important things.

MY: No, I just don't seem to remember too much about it at all.

BJ: Any projects or anything like that you helped the school?

MY: There must have been! There must have been some reason why we had PTA. It's funny, I don't recall very much about it at all.

BJ: Now, did you start going to church up here when you first came to town?

MY: No, we went to the Episcopal church and we continued going there for years after we came out here. And then about the time my husband retired from the university, I decided I'd... well, I tell you, really the reason I think that I did that was our son, who had grown up here and had finished up at Amherst College and gone through and got his Ph.D. and so on, died with leukemia. And the people here in Pelham were so very kind at that time, you know, bringing things to the house and the people at the church were.. and I had

never gone to church here—were very nice, very good, very kind. And somehow I felt much closer to them than I did to the people at the Episcopal Church. Not that it's anything against the Episcopal people, it's just that that was my feeling. And another reason that I like this little church, it's the kind of a church I grew up in in Iowa.

BJ: Were you Congregational in Iowa too?

MY: No, that was what they call a Christian Church, was the Church of Christ, sometimes they called it in Iowa. If you say a Christian Church, they say, well, all churches are Christian.

BJ: I know. Well, I grew up in a Congregational Church and was very active in P.F. and all that kind of thing. But was your husband Episcopalian or how did you end up in an Episcopalian Church?

MY: Well, he's Armenian and when he was going to an out-of-state university, the Episcopal Church there was the nearest thing to any kind of a church that he had attended as growing up in a foreign country. It was the nearest like a Greek Orthodox or whatever, an Armenian Church is much the same. So he was going to this when he was at Ames—he was going to an Episcopal Church. Then when he came here and I said he lived with these two old ladies, they were Episcopalians so then he started going to the Episcopalian church here in Amherst.

BJ: Was it a big move for you to come from Iowa out here? Was that unusual? Did your family think you were going too far away or something like that?

MY: I was older. I was 36 when I was married so I was old enough to know. It wasn't like I was coming out when I was 16. So that in itself made a little difference. It was kind of a break, you know, leaving all my family. But I had been here two different summers before I was married. I came out during vacation because my husband was here.

BJ: It was a long courtship then, wasn't it?

MY: Yes, long but not often. One year my brother and the girl he was going with went to Maine to see some of her relatives and I rode that far. They brought me off here and then they went on to Maine and then they stopped and picked me up on the way back. And then the other year I came out by bus and stayed for two or three weeks. So I had been here. It wasn't just that it was the first time I ever came. But I've been very fortunate. I've been home often. Practically, well, maybe not every year, but... And my family came this way.

BJ: A lot of the people I've interviewed have been, of course, from this area. Now Mary Taylor comes from Indiana but Mary Taylor's ancestors are all from out here so she kind of claims ancestry while you and I don't. But did you find when you came out that there were customs or very noticeable differences between this

part of the country right here and back where you were that you had to change some ways or anything like that?

MY: No, I don't think so—no.

BJ: Probably if you have to think about it there wasn't. It's like if you really notice it then that would be something. Did you get involved in Town Meetings? Or did you go regularly?

MY: I always went to Town Meetings. My husband and I both did. You see, my husband was assessor here for eighteen years. That was after I was off the School Committee and he was assessor.

BJ: And do you remember anything special about Town Meeting? Any big issues that were causing everybody to fight or something like that back then?

MY: Well, I ought to, because Danny Allen was there. We surely had...

BJ: I don't know what would happen if he wasn't there year after year after year! It'd be kind of dull.

MY: Well, he does kind of liven it up.

BJ: So has he always been sort of the one asking things?

MY: Yes, yes.

BJ: He claimed he didn't used to do that. He claimed he used to be shy. I think he said that.

MY: Well, I mean, he has his good points.

BJ: Your husband was assessor. What did that involve at that time?

MY: Well, it involved a great deal. I mean, they had the whole thing. It was much more of a job than it is now because now they have a girl that does part of the work, you know. And part of it is already printed up for them so they only have to do it...

BJ: So he'd have to go around once a year?

MY: Once a year they went to all houses. They met once every two weeks, I think.

BJ: Do you remember how many houses there were at that time?

MY: No, I don't. If he were home he would. His memory is much better than mine.

BJ: I don't know whether it would be helpful to talk to him, too sometime or not. Was he involved that much in town things?

MY: Just assessor. Right now, you know, he's treasurer.

BJ: Oh, he's treasurer now! Isn't that the job that's changed so much?

MY: Yes, four. I think, four. He's trying it now. He may stay with it, I think. Numbers are sort of a fascinating thing to him. He taught statistics in school.

BJ: How long has he been retired?

MY: Let's see. I retired in 1967 and he retired in about 1970.

BJ: You were part of the Women's Club, you mentioned.

MT: Yes.

BJ: Was that a vital part of the town?

MY: It was at one time. It was a very active group of women and they brought people together. At that time, of course, the town didn't have as many houses as it does now and so you would meet up with people that you might not otherwise, you know. You might not, for instance, they wouldn't get people maybe that would come to church or they might not be people that would come to PTA. So you would have a little cross-section of town that you would not have met before. And for a number of years it was very active.

BJ: What kind of things did it do as far as projects or things like that?

MY: We often would have a speaker. And sometimes it would be just a social kind of gathering. What else can I tell you about the Women's Club?

BJ: You did mention that it was a cross-section of people in town.

MY: Yes.

BJ: Were there people in town even then when it was smaller that you never saw anything of because they weren't involved as much in the town?

MY: Yes.

BJ: A lot of people, you said?

MY: A number of people I should say.

BJ: I always wondered. You know, one gets the impression that back then everybody was all together and active but the more I ask it seems like there were a lot of people who lived up here who were on their own, off on their own, back in the hills and places or not even that but they just didn't partake that much. So there was a group of people who, I don't want to say ran the town, but I mean, were involved in the civic things.

MY: I think that's true. There were people who did run the town and they were the same people year after year, you know. And then, when the town sort of changed pictures and more people were moving out, more college and university connected people, it was a little hard because they resented it very much, I think, having outside people come in and tell them what was wrong with the town or what the town ought to be spending their money for. So that I think at first—and then, of course, when we were first here he town was sort of divided. You know, there was the top of the hill and there was the bottom of the hill. And the top of the hill always felt a little bit like the people down here got more of the advantages and more of the money went into this section rather than the people at the top of the hill who didn't quite get their share. I think they used to have two town meetings. I mean, there would be a Town Meeting at the top of the hill and a Town Meeting down here. Maybe that's wrong. But definitely there was a division of the way. Of course, at that time, even the school was divided. At the top of the hill school and there was a school down here.

BJ: And you mentioned you didn't get up that way much really except to go maybe if your relatives came or something. I get that impression that people down here didn't even hardly know—some of them hadn't even met—some of the people up at tip of the hill even though they'd all lived here for years and years and years.

MY: Well, people maybe had more of a tendency to go downtown. For instance, the library. My children never went to the Pelham Library. They always went to the Jones Library.

BJ: Was it always at the Rhodes School? The library?

MY: No, it used to be over in the Town Hall.

BJ: Oh, but it was still up there. Sure, it couldn't have been in the Rhodes School because you had school there! I know, they're trying to see about moving that down this way. I use it but only. When the top of the road is closed in the winter, I can't go through there and so it takes me longer to go up to this library than it does to go in town. But it's a nice library. But it's a problem.

MY: I think the library commission are much more active now and people are much more interested in the library than in years past.

BJ: Really?

MY: Oh yes. Very much so since they moved over to the other building. And then they organized what they call Friends of the Library. And there's a Library Association, I think. It's open more hours too.

BJ: You mentioned that there was some resentment. That would have been a period of time after you were out here when more of the people started moving out here.

MY: Yes, that was after I came here. We still felt the ...

BJ: Did you begin to resent all those newcomers too?

MY: No.

BJ: I think some people, once they become native...

MY: Well, you had to live here a long, long time before you were a native.

BJ: Oh heavens, I know. You'll probably never make it either, right? I certainly won't, I know.

MY: I don't think there's that feeling now. Some, maybe, but not anything like it was.

BJ: How did that kind of resentment show up—you know what I mean? What kinds of things would people do?

MY: I guess it would show up in Town Meeting when there would be some article you'd vote on and the natives—and I don't speak unkindly of the natives—the people who had lived here would more likely vote together and then the other people would vote together. So you could sort of get that division at the Town Meeting when the articles were discussed.

BJ: Do you remember like any social issues in town? I don't mean socializing but issues of people having needs and this kind of thing before. Now, there seems to be a system in which people seem to get taken care of more. But do you remember anything like that where people would have problems or needs or where the community would band together or anything like that?

MY: No. The only thing that I think about is that the church and especially the Women's Guild was always helpful at times, at a time like that.

BJ: You knew, though, even though you weren't involved in the church, you knew that that was true?

MY: Yes. You'd know that they were—you know, if anybody was ill they were there to help or if anyone got burned out, the Guild always had a little fund of money that helped.

BJ: You mentioned getting burned out. Did that happen more frequently then, do you think?

MY: I don't know that it did.

BJ: You don't remember.

MY: But every now and then there'd of course, be a fire. I'm thinking specifically since I got into the Guild, that there had been twice that I know of there have been

- fires that the Guild has not give any great amount of money but they show their interest.
- BJ:** They would still do that today then?
- MY:** Oh yes.
- BJ:** There seems to be a problem with the church in terms of its staying the same size or not getting any bigger.
- MY:** It isn't getting any bigger, no, and it's very fortunate that we have this minister. He's, you know, excellent. Mr. Fiegenbaum. I don't know how Pelham can be so fortunate to have this kind of a man and his family interested enough to come every Sunday. Not only does he have his service, but he has charge of the young people and his wife has charge of the Sunday School.
- BJ:** Do they come from South Hadley?
- MY:** Yes, he is at Mount Holyoke. He's, I suppose, in the religion department. I don't think he's a chaplain, I think he teaches. A very fine man.
- BJ:** Do you remember any community things that went on from the time that you were here? Like, did they do any programs or plays or entertainments or anything like that as a community?
- MY:** Not except that in the Women's Club. I remember putting on little plays but that wasn't for the community—that was for the Guild themselves. Now-a-days, of course, the firemen do a lot They have a Christmas party, they have a Halloween party.
- BJ:** So were there any all-community things that you can remember?
- MY:** I don't recall any.. I don't recall... We didn't attend any.
- BJ:** Do you think that was because of transportation being harder to get from place to place?
- MY:** Well, of course, there was always Old Home Day. I suppose that would be a community.
- BJ:** That always went on?
- MY:** Yes, I can remember going to Old Home Day for years back.
- BJ:** And can you tell me a little about that?
- MY:** I never had any part in it, but many times it would be a diner. I think that since the Historical Society has been formed, they have been responsible for it.

BJ: Who sponsored it before?

MY: Frankly I don't know. There must have been an organization of people. I was not a part of it. But we'd go for the dinner or supper or whatever they were having. And now-a-days they have the recreation things for the youth.

BJ: So in some ways you're saying that they have more community things *now*!

MY: I would say so, yes.

BJ: Sometimes one gets the impression that there were more things back when it was smaller but maybe there were for people who knew what was going on. Somebody talks about ball games over at Page's.

MY: Yes, I think that may have been even before. I don't remember. Charles was a ball player but he always went downtown for Little League and that kind of thing. So I guess that was maybe a little bit before my children had grown up.

BJ: I think it was men playing actually.

MY: The Pages were very good about bringing young kids to play too.

BJ: Were there any "town characters" around when you were here or had they all faded away by the time you made it?

MY: I bet you speak of Dan Allen, you know. I suppose he was one.

BJ: That's true. So he was a character even when he was young!

MY: As long as I have been going to... but, of course, he's not as old as I. Well, he's probably near my age. As long as I can remember going to Town Meeting, Daniel Allen was always there keeping things lively.

BJ: How about people who lived out in town who weren't active? I mean there seemed to have been some people in town, kind of hermits or people like that. But maybe that was before your time. I'm just trying to see when they did fade away. Do you know of any people like that?

MY: Well I've known of people whom I didn't know and I'd never seen at Town Meeting or anything, but just knew that this was where so and so lived.

BJ: They kept to themselves.

MY: Yes, they were not particularly interested in the town.

BJ: But you didn't find it that different. Did you grow up—you mentioned Henry Wallace—is that around Shenandoah? Where did you grow up in Iowa?

MY: No, I grew up in Des Moines, just outside of Des Moines.

- BJ:** So you were more in an urban area. So that would be different from here no matter what part of the country, being from the city and then coming to the country.
- MY:** Well no, we were outside the city.
- BJ:** But you didn't find it that different out here?
- MY:** Well, the thing that I noticed mostly, the trees, especially in the fall. I think that part was different.
- BJ:** Were there less or more trees around when you came out than there are now? Do you remember specifically? Because there was a time when this was all cleared more.
- MY:** Of course, right here in our own yard there's been a big change because the trees were small, you know, when we first came out and now they are big things. More or less on the street I don't think it was...
- BJ:** That must have been before.
- MY:** Yes. Well, I suppose the reason you might think that where all the stone fences are there must have been at one time a tree or two.
- BJ:** Well, no. People talk about how they could see from the end of South Valley to South Amherst or they could see clear across up to North Valley because all those trees were cleared and they are about that old, I think. Interesting, I wasn't sure when it would have changed.
- MY:** We did have the boy scouts and girl scouts.
- BJ:** Oh sure. Did you get involved in that?
- MY:** Yes, the girl scouts. I think if you have children then you sort of get involved in the things that they're interested in. That's the schools and scouts.
- BJ:** And you were involved in the girl scouts. You led them?
- MY:** I didn't lead them, but I was on the girl scout—they had the Girl Scout Council, I guess we called it. I remember I was the treasurer which we never had much money but I was there for years and years and years.
- BJ:** Did they have 4-H out here at that time?
- MY:** There was 4-H, yes because Charles was in 4-H. Judith was not in 4-H.
- BJ:** And Mrs. Reed was leader for years and years. Yes, indeed, she told me that.

MY: She had a picture of Charles and Glen Bennett. Glenn lived right down around the corner. He and Charles were about the same age.

BJ: Charles was the oldest.

MY: Yes, Charles was very active in boy scouts and went through to get his top honors.

BJ: Was he an Eagle Scout?

MY: He was one of the first Eagles—the first Eagle Scout they had for along time, I guess, and then after that there seemed to be quite a few articles in the paper to announce Eagle Scouts. It was a great thing. Glen's father was the scout leader for a long time. He was a great outdoor man. In fact, he just died recently, on the trail in Main hiking, which would have been probably his wish if he could have chosen to die that way.

BJ: When did you son graduate from high school? What period of time are we talking about?

MY: He graduated from college in 1959 so it'd be 1955.

BJ: And your daughter would have been?

MY: And Judith graduated from high school in 1959. About four years difference.

BJ: Well, I think that we've covered most of the areas, you know, community things, that you can talk about. And so we can stop. We don't need to just fill out our time. We're almost done anyway, actually. Have you always been a person who was famous for her cooking?

MY: I don't know that I've been famous but I like to cook. Somehow the Hampshire Gazette found out that I cook and they have been two or tree times. They came over one time when I made noodles.

BJ: Oh, you made noodles! My grandmother used to make noodles.

MY: And then when the cookbook came out, I had several recipes in that and so they had looked through the book and called me to see if they could come over and interview me. And in interviewing me I had mentioned that I had done some Armenian cooking. So then they came over.

BJ: That must have been the article that I saw was about the Armenian.

MY: You see, there were six in my family. We were on a big farm and my mother was very busy, of course, with six kids and hired hands and everything. We each kind of had our little thing that we did. I had one sister that liked to sew so she did the sewing. I preferred to work in the kitchen so I kind of got started that way.

BJ: Well, these cookies are delicious!