

**Interview with Lynn and Jean Taber**  
**Saturday, March 2, 2013**

AB = Allan Buddle

LT = Lynn Taber

JT = Jean Taber

AB: Okay. Okay, well I'm Allan Buddle and I'm here at Lynn and Jean Taber's house to do an interview and learn all that we can learn about the relationship between the Tabers and the Backbone Ridge, which the government bought back in the 1930s. And I'll ask Lynn if you'll identify yourself so that the typist has your name.

LT: Lynn Taber born in 1935....

JT: I'm Jean Bergen Taber, and born 1932

JT: And I moved to New York in 1951

AB: 1951, OK, thank you. Alright, now I have a series of questions that we ask every one and I think you may have already answered them. We have your names now and I wanted to ask T-a-b-o-r right?

LT: E-r.

AB: E-r. OK I never get that right, it's "e-r". And you were born, tell me again when you were born?

LT: February 3, 1935. I was born on my dad's 45<sup>th</sup> birthday.

AB: Uh-huh and where?

LT: Here, well no I was born in Montour Falls.

AB: In a hospital there, but your family was here?

LT: This house, my family was here then. My dad bought this farm in 1919.

AB: OK and Jean?

JT: Well I moved in 1951 to the corner of Bergen Road and with my parents. My dad had recently retired as a farm machinery dealer and started a small sheep and chicken farm.

AB: OK, alright so what was your dad's name, your parents' name? Both of your parents?

LT: My father's name was Caleman, C-a-l-e-m-a-n. And my mother's name was Lenabel, L-e-n-a-b-e-l.

AB: And her maiden name?

LT: Conger. She was a C-o-n-g-e-r.

AB: OK. And Jean your parents?

JT: My dad was. Schenck, S-c-h-e-n-c-k, Bergen, B-e-r-g-e-n. And my mother was Carol Thompson, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n.

AB: OK. And your mother was in this area too? Was she?

JT: Well they moved from Neshanic, New Jersey.

AB: OK

JT: And so she grew up though in, Niagara County.

AB: Alright OK. Now I need to ask how many, what siblings you had, do you have brothers and sisters?

LT: I had a brother and a sister, and they both, are deceased now. Grant was my brother and Clara Pierson in Trumansburg was my sister. And they both deceased in '98.

AB: OK. And who was Clara's, what was Clara's husband's name?

LT: Ralph Pierson.

AB: Oh yes, I knew Ralph Pierson.

LT: You knew Ralph?

AB: I worked with Ralph at the Parks Commission.

LT: Oh yeah, yeah.

AB: Very nice guy.

JT: And Clara was twenty when Lynn was born, and Grant was sixteen, so.

AB: So you were the kid?

LT: Yeah I was born on my dad's 45<sup>th</sup> birthday.

AB: Ha, very good. OK now can you tell me a little bit about what your, I think I know the answer already, but what your parents did for a living?

LT: Well my parents, my father's family, he was born in 1890 and they were in Millerton Pennsylvania and they moved up when he was seven years old so that would have been 1897, they moved up here to this farm, the farm we have it over here, yeah the farm over near Newtown Road and were share croppers. And Pellet in Watkins owned the farm owned the land and the worked it in shares. And my dad went to Reynoldsville School and then wanted to go on to high school but that's when you had to go away to go to high school and, and his parents had him come back home and take care of the farm so he never, my father never went past eighth grade.

AB: OK and what type of a farm was it?

LT: It was just a regular...

AB: General farm?

LT: Regular farm and they had cash crops and a few animals, things like that. And that was mile over the road from here.

AB: Uh-huh OK.

LT: And the 1919 this place came up for sale. This home place here. And dad bought it from a man in 1919 and, and they borrowed the money from a man on, a mile north of us to buy the place and the guy said to them "If you can't pay up for it, it'll fit right in with my place"

AB: What was his name do you know his name?

LT: Boyd, George Boyd

AB: OK.

JT: And then, but before that your dad and mother were tenant farmers for Seymour Bodle.

LT: Yeah

JT: [Inaudible] across the road there.

LT: My dad, my dad, got married in 1913 and this place across the road here where Grant, my brother Grant essentially owned the Seymour Bodle owned that land over there

and my mother and dad worked that farm from 1913 to 1919 as share croppers on that land across the road.

JT: And I believe you told me that, that house when they moved in was a new house that had be built to replace one that had burned.

LT: Yes in that house that Grant, my brother lived in, was a brand new house when my mother and Dad moved in because the previous one had just burned.

JT: Lynn's mother talking about burning, she told me she stood in these kitchen windows before these barns and silos were in the way, but she saw about thirty homes burn, during her life span of living in this house, and most everyone was from a chimney fire, maybe one or two caused by lightning.

AB: Ah, my goodness.

JT: And you can go around the Newtown Road, of course we're up on a hill, and you can see over across the way, and up the Newtown Road towards Odessa, but she said fire was her greatest fear. And when they first moved in this house, and Grant was a baby and I believe Clara was just nine or four they had lightning set fire to the porch roof which was a shingle roof and they had just moved in, didn't have a real ladder, but Caleman found one that had just one leg and he went up and tore the roof apart and got the fire out. And I think that, that you know fear of fire was a real...

AB: I think that probably was pretty common because, you know fire departments were a long ways away and there was no communication to get them if you needed them. Yup.

LT: And there wasn't a...

JT: And people burned wood. That was what they burned.

LT: And there was only a fire department in major areas, a major place like, you know rural area didn't have any so.

AB: Are you familiar with Patrons of Husbandry Fire Insurance Association? The grange fire insurance, did you have insurance with them or your family?

LT: We have had.

AB: Have had.

LT: Yeah but I'm with another company now. I used to have.

AB: Uh-huh.

JT: It's that one Watkins people used to come around to and deliver products.

AB: Oh, Watkins company, yes. Yup, you know I remember some of these things too, I shouldn't admit it but I do. We had the Watkins company come by and this about your interview not mine, but when I was a kid I used to stay with my grandparents my brother and I would a couple of weeks each year during the summer and there was a peddler that used to come by and his name, I so remember his name, he was called Old Emit, and he carried a suit case and he walked and he carried a suitcase and in his suitcase he'd have needles and a few candy bars and things that my grandmother would want you know buttons and things like that. I always remember his name, he was Old Emit and he walked.

LT: There was, there used to be a "Raleigh Man". The Raleigh Man used to come through here then the Watkins man.

AB: Uh-huh.

LT: Peddle the spices and the things that.

AB: Cough syrup.

LT: Cough syrup and [inaudible] in the little thing he used to carry there.

AB: Yup. Well I need to ask a little bit about the, your farm here. Was this started up as a dairy farm, I mean when you came here was it a small dairy?

LT: Well my father, no, no. When my father and mother bought this place in '19, the barn actually only had a hay roof on it, what we call the big barn, and they did hay. My mother and father did a lot of hay, so they put hay in the barn and press it out and take it down to the rail road in the winter to ship it to New York or wherever it went. So my dad raised the roof on the barn, and put a gamble roof on the barn so it'd hold more hay. Then the, I can remember once the hay presser come, which would be an upright hay press.

AB: Now when you say an upright hay press do you, what do you mean by that? What do you mean by an upright hay press? Can you describe it to me?

LT: Well [laughs] it was just a box I guess and more or less they put hay in it and people jumped, men would jump.

AB: OK, you're referring to what they called a "jump press" then.

LT: "Jump press" OK, jump press, upright hay press. Actually the Hazard Hay Press Company was made in Trumansburg where Millspaugh's is now.

AB: Uh-huh I learned that from Don Betzler.

LT: [laughs] I told him.

AB: [laughs] I know he said you did.

LT: And there is a Hazard Hay Press down in Darling barn now. I've never seen it, but.

AB: I saw it. When we had that program on, Meck- Mecklenburg at the fire house, I learned about that then, and we went, a couple guys went and looked at it.

LT: I heard it was in the barn.

AB: It's in the barn and its set-up straight up and it looks to me like it's holding the barn up.

LT: Oh wow. Keith Kelsey told me that it was there cause I imagine Raymond Darling and an upright, or jump press you call it, upright hay press. And Keith told me that if you can get the patent number off it you could send down to Washington and get blue prints of the hay press.

AB: Bet we'll follow up with that one.

LT: If you could ever, if the patent sticker was still on it, you could send to Washington to get the details of the hay press. Now my, I remember one year, my mother first when the hay pressers came, I'm not just sure of who they were but they set up, and one, one year they were here a month and my mother fed them three meals a day and she said she went through twenty-five pounds of flour a day.

AB: Wow.

[Laughter]

LT: But then they pressed (baled) the hay and then my dad, he would like to use a sleigh if they had enough snow he could use the sleigh he'd take it to Burdette and put it in a rail road car.

AB: Uh-huh, how big were the bales that came out of that thing, can you remember?

LT: This is another question that I wished I could've asked but they must have been something like 2x3x4 or something like that.

AB: "2x3x4" yeah.

LT: Yeah I'm just not sure how many dad got or many he put in a car or things but. These are all questions I wished I could've asked.

JT: One of the things just to back track, the family that was living here when Caleman bought the farm was Birge Morris and Kate and they had to go back down on the Skyline Road where that Morris farm is to take care of elderly parents and that's why they gave

up the farm. She was a McCarthy and so they'd only been here a few years I think I don't know how long but they had to go down on this Skyline Road. So then Birge was on the town Board for a long time and so Dorothy...

LT: Morris.

JT: Daughter in law right? Birge's daughter-in-law?

LT: Yup.

JT: Got to be on the town council. So that's why it came up for sale.

AB: I see, that's why the family got the farm.

LT: We're only six years away for a century farm now.

AB: Yeah. Time flies by doesn't it?

[Laughter]

JT: Well for this place, they had bought the other place before that.

LT: So.

AB: Well I have to ask you a question about, about the, I have an idea that someday we would like, our group would like to do an old fashioned hay day, and do you think we could ever get that press out of that barn or would you have to look at it first?

LT: I've never seen it so I have no idea about

AB: Yeah well it's probably twelve, fourteen feet tall and about four foot square setting up and there a lot of iron in it obviously big old presses you know.

LT: Keith told me he thinks some of the pieces are missing now. But like he said you could send to get the blue print and restore it.

JT: There might be some wood parts that got wet or something that would be gone.

LT: I have no idea other than the picture I showed you what it would look like [inaudible], but it was a jump press, and Johnny Shuler he was a neighbor up South of Mecklenburg he was one of the last ones to jump for my dad so. So it was quite a project to press the hay, my mother and father they put it in the barn through the summer with a hay fork and mowed it away.

AB: Well when I was a kid that's the way we put the hay away, my dad and my grandfather both farmed their horses and used put in the hay. But we fed it out, in the

winter we had some dairy cows, but my dad used to talk about pressing the hay in the winter, the press used to come around and they'd all get together. [In regards to a dog in the room] He's OK.

JT: He's alright I just don't want him to tip it off.

AB: Oh yeah. So what do you think about that, someday trying do an old fashioned hay day thing? You be interested?

LT: Be different wouldn't it. There's not very many of us left anymore that know anything about what you're talking about.

AB: Well. I have one of the old hay loaders, most of the old hay loaders that you see the old fashioned ones have flats and they go up like this, but the one I have is like the one both my dad and grandfather had was a rope loader and it had flats across and a rope that went up and around. I have one of those sitting outside right now but it's been inside till a few months ago.

LT: My dad never had a hay loader he, he always pitched it on by hand.

JT: They had some sheep.

LT: Yeah they had sheep.

JT: Sold wool.

LT: There was an orchard here on the farm, every farm had an orchard on it I mean actually there was an apple evaporator there in Reynoldsville where they processed and dried apples and shipped 'em out. So ever farm had ten acres or orchard and the apples were quite a saleable product at the time.

AB: Well farms were more diversified then than they are now. Now it's either crops, and if it's crops well it's probably corn, or soy beans, and wheat.

JT: Well they've got a good price of eggs. It's been amazing compared to other items, you know the price that they got for eggs, and your mother sold butter she made butter.

LT: My mother sold butter, my dad had a few cows you know, they churned.

JT: They, like you say it's diversified.

LT: Yeah and she made butter and sold butter.

JT: Potatoes were another thing. We had a big cellar, they had a big cellar, I wasn't here, and they pretty much filled it with potatoes sometimes and you know send 'em out in the spring or whatever. The price got better. You don't hear that mentioned but the ridge up

along the Newtown Road was called “Potato hill” when I first came here to visit in the ‘40s.

LT: The type of soil was good for potatoes. So there was potatoes and apples and dairy products.

JT: Tobacco

AB: There was tobacco too?

JT: Smiths grew tobacco they used have a barn they called the tobacco barn out on the Perry City road.

LT: Well it’d be from Perry City out towards the county out there. On Smiths’ property they grew cigar wrappers, is what the tobacco was here. Cigar was the type, for cigar wrappers.

AB: Is that right? And this would be east of Perry City?

LT: East of Perry City. Right about, about one or two miles.

JT: It’d be in Tompkins County actually.

AB: Yup. I interviewed Marilyn Smith last week. She would probably know about that too because she grew up in that area.

LT: Right along the road there was a tobacco barn. Like a slanted barn.

AB: I’ve seen them in the Southern Tier, I didn’t know there were any in this area.

LT: So that was. It was hay, hay was probably their biggest crop.

[A dog enters and briefly interrupts the interview]

JT: Another plant that they brought in, and I don’t know if it was right here, was teasel that they raised. Because they used it for the wool, and raise the net on the wool.

AB: Yup. We went to a museum in Canada a couple of years ago and they had a woolen mill, a big long woolen mill. And they had teasel in machines and it would pull like that and like you say raise the net on the wool.

LT: But your, your Federal land over there. As it started out it was the Hector land use area, and out of the, the headquarters were out of the Green Mountain in Vermont, was the headquarters for that particular part of land. And the only Federal land in New York State is Backbone Ridge, and when Regan, President Regan, got to be president he put up as surplus land for sale. So they held hearings around, was one in Newfield, and one was

in Ithaca. If you asked people, if they could put their finger on the land I don't know if they could but they all used the land, for hiking and everything, so that was the end for the Evercorn being acreage in the Town of Hector. But it was put up for sale for surplus land, and then it turned out to be Finger Lakes National Park.

All together: Forest.

LT: Forest. It's on its own now but it was out of Green Mountain.

AB: Well there's an archeologist who comes out from Green Mountain National Forest a couple of times a year to help us work on cemeteries. On some of the old back abandoned cemeteries.

LT: Yeah 'cause they used to have control of it.

AB: Well, can you tell me a little bit about the lands over there, the farms, the families, anything that you can, that you could share about, about that area?

LT: I don't really know. Like the two that I told you, Orville Saari was displaced and he went up on MacIntyre Road, and States' farm (Floyd States and two others were on the Gooseberry Gang to look plants-just mark it, and others took it out) was evidently displaced. That's the only two that I can really tell. I mean my mother and father of course, really knew a lot of the people up in the area. But I mean, me, as a kid, did not remember.

AB: You were a kid.

JT: What year did was it take it up?

AB: Pardon?

JT: What year was it taken up?

AB: It started in, like 1930-1931 and up through 1935 and the actually beyond that up to 1940.

JT: Because his mom taught in Reynoldsville before she was married. So she knew a lot of the families around there and I know she always felt bitter about it, because she felt that the people that talked to her, felt pressured into selling. She didn't think that they wanted to leave. And that's not the story that is now told, we had the Finger Lakes National Forest people come talk to the Farm Bureau once and they came to talk and I was glad your mother wasn't here then, because it wasn't the same story that they are telling that she had told when I first came here about it being taken up. You know some of the people may have been, relieved or whatever to get money and seen their house, their farm gone but some of them were definitely bitter about it and so she at least felt

that way. Like it was unfair, and they would've been just as able to survive, because a lot of places came up for taxes in that period. It wasn't just there.

LT: No here, right here that place across the road, came up for taxes, and then, and then...

JT: The Darling place.

LT: And then my brother bought the three places west off his place, the two Darling, the Bill and Albert Darling and the Holencamp place, all came for taxes. Just south of us, a farm south of us, Gutzwiller Farm, Bergen bought that for taxes. Sixty acres east of us here on top of the hill, my dad and Ken Wright bought that for taxes, split it, my dad got twenty-four and Ken got thirty-six acres. Because my dad wanted the spring up there, there's a live spring up there, and then of course Ken Wright when he sold out I put it, I bought it and put it back close to a sixty acre chunk again. But all these places around here were sold for taxes, back in the late '30s early '40s.

JT: Well a lot.

LT: A lot of places.

AB: Well I found a report about the you know not just this area but over where Sugar Hill is, and Connecticut Hill, and several places along the Southern Tier, and on the average about half the properties at that time, and this is the '30s, were abandoned. Because you know people couldn't pay their taxes I guess or for other reasons they moved out. Like you mentioned someone was here then they needed to move back to take care of their family. Berge and Kate Morris moved back to Skyline Drive to help care for Berge Morris' father.

JT: Their families. See that's why his father didn't go to high school cause his parents went to Pennsylvania where they come from, to, to take care of elderly relatives. I was never sure of who the relative was but we have a picture of a cabin Laam had down in Pennsylvania and the came up here because times were bad when they came up in the late 1800s to be tenant farmers. But, I have a clipping of an article where they were trying to encourage people especially people with families to settle down in the northern part of Pennsylvania, because they wanted to get that settled and they were making incentives for people to move. A lot of people came up from, Orange County was it Lynn?

LT: Yeah, Catskills area.

JT: Yeah.

AB: Well FDR, one of the programs that he wanted to implement when he was governor of New York State, but it, it never happened, but he wanted to take people, unemployed people in the cities, and bring them out and put them on these abandoned, in these

abandoned farm houses. But that never happened, it was just like a relocation but that thing never happened.

LT: My father, I think he sold his hay to a broker. I think it was D.J. Caywood, a broker he sold hay to. And the good hay went down to New York for the horses, the police horses. Poor hay would go down to the mines for the mules.

[One of the grandsons, Steve enters. More dog talk].

LT: Well so you got more questions?

AB: Well you've got notes there, I'd like to hear what you've got.

LT: Well I've gone through my notes.

JT: One of the things you asked about our farm here. They did have cows, and horses, and sheep I think, early. I don't know if they still had sheep when you came along.

LT: No, no, never shipped milk until probably the late '40s early '50s, and then we shipped cheese milk 'cause we didn't have a barn that was... adequate.

AB: Cold enough?

LT: In 1953 we built a barn that, we built a milking barn. And of course that was good enough that I mean it could be inspected of course sanitation wise. We shipped food milk from 1953 on.

AB: To Pollio? Is that where it went?

LT: Yup it always went, up to Watkins, until, we did ship to Interlaken for a while. Pollio bought that Sheffield plant up there, we shipped up there for a little while.

AB: Did you?

LT: Yup.

AB: Who, who was the milk truck driver?

LT: Tom, Tom Stewart.

AB: Tom Stewart? Oh my goodness, well it wasn't that long ago.

JT: You remember him?

AB: I know of him yes. I know his son.

LT: Yes he was...

JT: Well the other thing you got started, not in '51, but before we were married I think, you started growing certified seed.

LT: Yeah. We started, well '57 I bought the farm from my father, cause later on in '57 we got married and she worked at Culuer Seed and they were starting their seed business like and, and we got to be certified seed growers. And so that was for wheat and oats, and then the, we've done that for years, and then we...

JT: You got involved with corn for a while.

LT: We got involved with foundation seed stocks for a while growing parent stock/seed corn, we had to de-tassel and stuff like that, we knew a fella, he, we were involved with them for a few years growing so we...

AB: How did you de-tassel?

LT: By hand.

AB: By hand.

LT: [Laughs]

AB: That's a lot of work.

JT: But we had a lot of neighbor kids come over.

LT: Two rows of male, four rows of female, usually was a split planting, because of the maturity. You plant a female and when that comes up you plant a male. Then you got it so you have to start going in and pulling tassels, so it would shed pollen.

AB: Did you...

JT: We didn't have a big quantity of it, up to ten-acres.

AB: Did you have kids come to do that?

JT: Yeah. Our own, and I did that, of course and the kids from Meck. And the kids always ate lunch with us. Whenever felt like someone should sit out under a tree eating a peanut butter sandwich when we were in the house eating so they have this image when I see them now that we had hot muffins every day.

AB: That's what they remember. [Laughter]

JT: They remember some things like that but I don't think are factual.

AB: Do you remember the names of some of those kids? Can you name a few?

JT: Dave Poyer who has a masonry business now, he was one of them. A couple of the Foote girls helped with de-tasseling. Lloyd Shisler and Russell Shisler.

LT: Jerry Furcha.

JT: Russell Shisler went with Joey Chitwood so he left in the middle of the season once. Let's see who else we had... David Zaldokas.

LT: But with the de-tasseling we could.

JT: John Kelly.

LT: We could handle about ten acres, and it took forty hours per acre to de-tassel, to accumulate de-tasseled corn. So it was a time consuming operation, we made several trips through the fields to make sure there wasn't any shedders. But it was a good income at the time.

AB: I notice you have a flour bag there from...

JT: Mecklenburg Mills?

AB: Mecklenburg Mills up on the falls.

JT: Well you see because he owned where the Gunnings are now next door, Ken did farming, besides the machining business and seed mill, and he had a truck, but he had a dairy up where Gunnings are, next door to us. So when Lynn was ten or eleven he got to drive one of Ken's fairly new tractors ploughing with the rest of the guys up there you know, I think he always had a little soft spot for the neighbor kid, 'cause he only had a daughter. So when he went to Florida, he had Lynn drive his milk truck route for him one year, during February of 1956, when Ken and Leana went to Florida.

LT: Used to have pick up cans.

AB: Well, where was your route?

LT: My route, my route with Ken was, we started out here around Mecklenburg, and then we went to Interlaken, and then around Lodi, and 414 to Pollio in Watkins Glen, and well, Punk and um

AB: Burrs? Did you do Burrs? Burrs?

LT: Nah, not on that route. But then took the cans, we had to be in by 9 O'clock in the morning so. But up the Updike, up east, north east of, Interlaken. Ed Updike used to be there, then come back around to Westervelt, and that's who I had, that month I drove.

JT: And my dad was the first Allis Chalmers Machinery Dealer in New Jersey so Ken Wright always had a little soft spot for me too because my dad had been an Allis Chalmers Dealer like he was. They say a lot of the equipment is still in the mill down there.

AB: Is it?

LT: Now Kermit Leonard told me the other day that the mill, down the flour mill that Norman Culver did a thing on that. But Kermit told me, of course Kermit's ninety-five now so. But that the flour mill would run from midnight Sunday to midnight Saturday, it wouldn't shut down it ran twenty-four hours a day. And it took, Kermit said Art Kelsey took a load of flour to Geneva every week on an old hard tired Brockway. And I can remember that Brockway, if it's the same one with the hard rubber tires, Kermit said he could make it go faster than it did, but it took a load of flour every week to Geneva from the mill down here. And it would run twenty-four hours a day six days a week.

AB: That hard rubber tire that was probably chain driven too probably wasn't it?

LT: Probably

AB: Dalrymples have a couple of those down in the Southern Tier that they put in the parades down there every year, yeah.

LT: But old hard rubber tires. Of course Kelsey owned the farm right next door to us where Gunnings are now.

AB: Oh OK. Well as far as social kind of things I know anybody who owned a farm didn't have any time for socializing except for family, but were you involved with the grange at all or?

LT: My parents were. Me of course, I never was

AB: Uh-huh. What grange would they have been with? Mecklenburg?

LT: Mecklenburg.

AB: And what church? If there was church around which way would you go if you went to church?

LT: We went to Mecklenburg.

AB: Mecklenburg.

LT: And we rebuilt that church in 1957 and Jean and I were the first ones to be married in it after it was rebuilt. Floor to ceiling, used to be twenty-eight pews, there's only fourteen now, when they redid it.

AB: Were you involved with FFA or 4H?

LT: I was in FFA in Trumansburg, I mean, and Bill Crane was advisor, and I got the Empire Farmer Award for New York state and I got the um, in 1953 I got the American Farmer Degree from Kansas City. There were eight of us from New York that got it, and, and at the time there could be, I think so many, one for every thousand members or something so there were eight of us involved for New York State that year, 1953. So we went to Kansas City, and to the 25<sup>th</sup> annual convention it was, at the time twenty-sixth year, 25<sup>th</sup> annual convention in Kansas City. Of course now that's in Indianapolis now.

AB: Do you have any pictures from that event?

LT: Yeah, I've got some, in a scrap book.

AB: Do you?

LT: Yeah. But we drove to Kansas City, Mr. Crane and he took myself, and he took, I think there were two others.

JT: Ed Switzer and Gerald Reynolds.

LT: Ed Switzer went with us, and his nephew and [Inaudible]. And it took us three days to get to Kansas City because there was no four lane highways really. I mean the biggest highway going to Kansas City was the Lincoln Highway, U.S. 40, and that was four lane, that's probably the biggest highway we had. We mad it from here to Ohio the first night, and from Ohio to Springfield Illinois the second day, and then from Springfield we went on across the Mississippi at Hannibal, to Mark Twain's home, stopped there and then went on to Kansas City. Took us three days to get back home too.

JT: You talk about socializing. I think they used to have card parties here. Your folks used to tell about that where they had tables set up in three different rooms here.

LT: And of course my wife and I went to square dances. We danced in Burdette grange, and Enfield grange, and every week we went to some square dance somewhere. That was our social life.

AB: Uh-huh. Well my parent met at a grange function, back in Otsego County where I grew up. So if it wasn't for the grange I would be here talking to you now. [Laughter] Yeah I love those old square dances.

LT: It was very popular, everyone knew how to square dance.

JT: Of course there was a general store when I first came here. Mosher Store in Mecklenburg. That was kind of a gathering place for people, the snack market, a lot of, quite a few people ate there, I think. Workers for Ken Wright's mill, and people going

through. And I'm not sure for when, or how long that was open but Francis Furcha ran that for a long time.

AB: So Mecklenburg is kind of your base, as far as the nearest community then?

LT: Yeah, We were, I went to Mecklenburg School, and that was a two room school, we had two teachers. One to four, and five through eight, but there were a lot of schools like Perry City, and Reynoldsville, all the one room schools around. If you went to one of those you knew what the next class was learning you know.

AB: Learning double time.

LT: Yeah. So while she was teaching the next grade you could, you could always hear what was going on.

JT: I was going to ask; do you know Keith and Rhoda Bower?

AB: No I don't.

JT: Well I think he'd be a great one to talk to because I think he's about the same age or a year or two older than you are [Lynn]?

LT: Yeah he graduated.

AB: Where does he live?

JT: Over on...

LT: He lives just by Iradell Road, over by Buckhill Road.

AB: OK, Iradell.

JT: I was going, I had a chance to go over there, I was going to have him read Gates' thing. And I think he would be interested in it, and I think they came to one of the fire houses when you had the Mecklenburg thing, I'm not sure, but he's sharp, he has physical problems be he's on top of things and he grew up in the area.

AB: Where'd he grow up?

LT: He went to Perry City School, and Keith told he had to start the fire there.

AB: Come in early before the rest of the kids. You mentioned Kermit Leonard too. Is he, would he be a person to interview too?

JT: Oh yeah. The only thing is Kermit doesn't hear. He has the best hearing aids but he's run electric saws and carpentry things for so long that he still doesn't hear. But if he gets on the subject.

AB: He can talk.

JT: Yeah, and he gets to everything. I mean he's one of the founding members of the Mecklenburg Fire Department. And he's interested in the old machinery so he would know about the jump press, how big the bales were. If you have a marker, like what do you call those finer pens?

LT: So just, if you could write your questions down then he could read it, cause he can't hear much.

JT: He cuts, our church makes wreaths here, I don't know if you've heard anything about that but our little Mecklenburg church makes wreaths for fundraising in our garage; we've been doing it for ten or twelve years, I don't know, Kermit cuts every twig on the branches for the ladies. Sits there on the stool, the girls make bunches and I make the wreaths, and people decorate them, we have people in and out. He's run different kinds of machinery. He used to have a ditcher with Donald Stillwell and did custom ditching.

LT: Yeah.

JT: Donald Stillwell yeah. So Keith Bower would know about that and all of it. Kermit early worked for Will Morris. And he told me that the first deer that was shot around here was shot up there on that property when they began to have deer hunting, when they came, started moving up from Pennsylvania or whatever.

AB: OK. I know nothing about that history of you know of wild life.

JT: And, Will Morris' farm is now the Gage farms.

LT: It was in the Watkins Express paper that it was a century farm back fifty years ago, or twenty-five or fifty years ago. But Kermit jumped for Charlie Morris hay press, so he's the last one around I knew that jumped.

AB: That picture...

LT: The club? Or group? Donnie Betzler's what club.

AB: The plowing day?

LT: No, the John Deere club.

AB: Oh the two cylinder club?

LT: The two cylinder club. Kermit, I think, is quite involved with that.

AB: Is he?

JT: Well a couple years ago he was still taking a tractor up the steam engine convention. So yeah he would be a great one. And in the winter he lives with Sally, his daughter and son-in-law, Charles and Sally Sumner, 105 Larchmont Drive, T-burg I think. Across for Doctor Low's, that area.

AB: I know that name but I don't know her.

JT: Well Rusty is in Avalon Homes, their daughter, and Chuck and Sally, Sally's an only child. But the, where was I going with this?

LT: Well Sally would be the one you'd have to contact, so she could explain to Kermit because of his hearing problem...

JT: Oh and in the summer he has his own place up on the lake. What's that road that you go down to Kermit's cottage?

LT: Interlaken Beach Road.

JT: Interlaken Beach Road, yeah.

LT: So if you get a hold of Sally, you can make arrangements to talk to Kermit cause I think he's there through the winter right?

JT: But soon, it'll have to be before fishing starts. [Laughter]

AB: Well it's a priority. Fishing is a priority.

JT: Well I think he'll go back to the lake when it's fishing season opening up. If she lets him.

LT: More questions?

AB: I'm looking through my list here. The flood of 1935, you don't remember that, that's the year you were born. But do you have any stories that you've heard about it?

LT: Very devastating.

AB: [Laughs] Yeah, I know.

LT: I can remember my dad talking about, it gullied a field that you could drive a tractor through.

JT: Actually that field out here below the building on the corner of the pasture, they said a horse and wagon could go in there and you'd not see them. So every time he cleared brush, he put stuff in there, and more stuff in there so he filled it and we work it now. But it was a real gully.

LT: Very devastating.

JT: And it came just when they planted buckwheat I think they had the ground worked for buckwheat, but the roots couldn't hold the soil as the crop had recently been planted.

LT: First of July is a very bad time of year, buckwheat planting time the last week of June to very early July.

AB: Did you ever try buckwheat?

LT: Yeah. We've done buckwheat, wheat, oats, corn.

JT: We've had to turn to triticale because the diseases that are coming in the wheat now. See, because we grew wheat for seed and there's not the demand for seed, because of the diseases.

AB: What is triticale? A cross between...

LT: Wheat and rye.

AB: Wheat and rye, OK.

LT: Grow it like wheat, grow it like rye whatever you want.

AB: So it's a fall plant crop?

LT: Yeah. Fall crop.

AB: I planted spelt for Agriculver for a few years. That was an interesting crop; that was planted in the fall like you know. Did you ever grow spelt?

LT: No, never had it.

JT: A few years we had barley a few times.

LT: We have had barley, but we've grown triticale for a few years.

JT: We grew for Agriculver for a long time.

LT: Until they sold out.

AB: Yeah.

JT: Did we start in '57?

LT: I think that was the first year I grew for them. First year they were up here, I was the first grower for them then they started branching out. I was the first one.

AB: Did you ever do any military service?

LT: No I didn't. No I, I. In fact Truman declared war on Korea the day before I graduated high school. Of course I was only fifteen, when I graduated so I didn't go. In '53 I turned eighteen and registered for the draft and being here on the farm with my father, did get a farm exemption. He had to have twenty-four credits before I got twenty four credits, and there really wasn't any way to get credits growing crops, so we built the barn and went to dairy. Cause you could get more credits for the cows, that why we've been in dairy ever since, but other than that I'd have been over in Korea. And it was up 'til, we were married in '57 this last draft card I got when we were married, I still carry it.

AB: [Chuckles] I know what you mean. I have my discharge papers and I know exactly where they are. [Laughter]

LT: We had to file an exemption every six months.

AB: Uh-huh. My dad was eighteen, well let's see he was born in 1917 so he was just at the right age when World War II came along. And at that point he was living on a farm with his dad, and his dad then left the farm and went to the village, and my dad had the dairy farm at that point so he was exempt in World War II.

LT: My brother Grant was involved in World War II. He had filed exemptions, and everything, and they were very tight.

JT: But he couldn't have gone anyway cause he only had one lung. He had pneumonia when he was sixteen.

LT: Unless they got really bad shape, towards the end they took everybody. Whether they could walk or not, you know what I mean.

JT: My dad was in France in the First World War, in Issodun. And he was in charge of the machine shop, with he called them Indo-Chinese, but I don't know if they were Vietnamese or what.

AB: I've heard that phrase but I don't know.

JT: And he didn't speak their language, and they didn't speak his. Of course he didn't speak French either, but he managed to train these people, and teach them how to run the lathes cause they had to make the parts for the airplanes.

AB: Really? Huh.

JT: And they didn't just send to Ohio you know or someplace, to get a new part, they had a machine shop set up. And he was due for a promotion, but he didn't take it because he felt that, he knew the machinist trade even though he only went to sixth grade. He was the eldest of seven children and the youngest one died very young. So he went to school in the winters, but they grew truck crops on Long Island, vegetables that they took to the farmers markets. So he went to school in the winter, but as soon as things opened up in the spring until they were harvested up in the fall that's what he did. But he always kept on reading and studying so he learned to weld. He built his own photographic enlargers and a lot of things like that, welders, because he figured stuff out I guess. And he came back on a, guess you'd call it a freighter when he came back to the states the only thing they had to eat was salmon, canned salmon, and the guys were all sick and they were down in this, pretty much a hold I guess, just, he would never eat canned salmon again. [Laughter] Yeah enough of that. Yeah so that's...

AB: Do you have any more things on your note pad there? You have any more notes?

LT: Nope

AB: You mentioned, I think you mentioned about was it your mother who saw when they were tearing down or burning the houses across the way. Did she have anything more to say, any more detail?

LT: Just that as the people moved out they destroyed the property. As I drive up Potomac Road you can still see a lot of lilac bushes in places, so there must have been a lot of places.

JT: Apple trees.

AB: Yup. Well someday when I finish, after we get this transcription done I'll bring it back. Then if you have some pictures that you would like to, that I could take a look at you mentioned a scrap book.

LT: I'd have to dig it out and have a look at it.

AB: Yeah I would like to see those and maybe if they're not locked in I could borrow and scan a couple or three. So we have some pictures to go with the story that would be great if we could do that. Yup. OK so you've finished?

LT: I'm finished

AB: Jean, you finished?

JT: I think so.